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Beyond the behaviour: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis into the school experiences of Primary age pupils who are 'at risk' of permanent school exclusion

Sophie Jane Loble

Doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law (FSSL), School for Policy Studies, Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol.

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Abstract

Behaviour and discipline in school, and in particular school exclusion, remains a significant and complex issue in the UK. Although exclusion rates were reported to decrease following concerning high exclusion rates recorded in the late 1990's/early 2000's, since 2013/14 exclusion rates have again been on the rise. In 2016/17 Primary school permanent exclusions rose from 55,740 to 64,340 (DfE, 2018). There is limited literature that explores the experiences of young people who are specifically 'at risk' of school exclusion, particularly within the Primary phase and therefore this study aimed to address this gap in the literature.

This study used an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore the school experiences of young people aged 7 to 11 years who were identified as being 'at risk' of permanent exclusion (PEX) by their school. Specifically, it hoped to illuminate our understanding of how young people who are at risk of PEX experience school; the barriers, what helps them, what is important to them and how they feel in school, with the hope to better inform future practice.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six young people at risk of PEX from their mainstream Primary school. Four key themes emerged from analysis of the data; sense of normalcy, threats to normalcy, experience of injustice and external influencing factors. A distinct finding from this study is the notion young people who are at risk of school exclusion likely want and strive for normal school experiences. Findings also imply that there are likely several factors that cause a young person to become at risk of school exclusion. From these findings and the consulted literature, a targeted intervention model to support young people at risk of school exclusion has been developed to support pupils at risk of school exclusion to help target support where needed.

Dedication

To my Grandad,

Who sadly passed away during my second year of training.

From a young age you took a great interest in my education and latterly my career,
and I know you would be proud of what I have achieved and how it will shape
my future.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all my fantastic family and friends for their support, encouragement and words of motivation throughout this journey. I would also specifically like to say a big thank you to my Dad for encouraging me not to give up on achieving my dreams.

A special thank you goes to my partner Matt. I literally could not have got through the last three years without you by my side. Your unbelievable patience, selflessness and continued optimism in my capabilities have been invaluable. Of course, I must also thank my cats Hugo and Oscar for their company, cuddles and entertainment on long study days.

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I would like to thank each of the schools that agreed to take part in this study and of course all the young people for taking the time to meet with me and talk about their school. Without them this research would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the EPS team for their continued support and interest throughout the research process.

Author's declaration

I declare that the work carried out in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

Signed:

Sophie Jane Lobley

Date:

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder
AROSE	At Risk of School Exclusion
ASC	Autism Spectrum Condition
BESD	Behavioural Emotional Social and Difficulties
BPS	British Psychological Society
CYP	Children and Young People
DFE	Department for Education
EBD	Emotional Behavioural and Difficulties
EHCP	Education Health and Care Plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
FEX	Fixed Term (period) Exclusion
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LA	Local Authority
PEX	Permanent Exclusion
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
SEBD	Social Emotional Behavioural and Difficulties
SEMH	Social Emotional Mental and Health
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

1. Introduction

“Every child, regardless of their characteristics, needs or the type of school they attend, deserves a high-quality education that allows them to flourish and paves the way to a successful future” (DfE, 2019).

1.1 Study overview

The disciplinary action of school exclusion continues to be a prominent concern embedded within the UK education system (McCluskey et al., 2016). Although exclusion rates were reported to decrease following concerning high exclusion rates recorded in the late 1990's/early 2000's, since 2013/14 exclusion rates have again been on the rise. Exclusion from school is not only likely to have a detrimental impact upon the outcomes of children and young people (CYP), but even society as a whole, and therefore it feels necessary that we continue to work towards both achieving and maintaining decreased school exclusion levels across the UK.

This study used an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to address the study aims which were to better understand the school experiences of a population of young people, age 7 to 11 years, who had been identified by their school as being at risk of permanent exclusion (PEX). Specifically, I wanted to identify factors that may contribute to them being 'at risk of school exclusion' (AROSE), what factors of school are important to them and what might be able to support them, to better inform intervention practices.

A total of six semi-structured interviews were conducted with young people age 7 to 11 years who were identified by their mainstream school as being at risk of PEX, using the study's participation criteria. This study intends to make positive contributions to the current literature on school exclusions, and illuminate our understanding of how young people who are deemed to be at risk of PEX experience school, in particular the barriers, what helps them, what is important to them and how they feel in school.

The remainder of this chapter will address why I chose this research topic and its relevance in the current context. I will then address the aims of the research and

outline the proposed research questions. The chapter will conclude with an outline of the thesis structure, with a summary of chapters included throughout the study.

1.2 My research topic choice and relevance to Educational Psychology

“Denying a child education is probably one of the most serious things you can do”

Senior Education Officer (Hayden, 1995)

I feel that this quote is important to hold in mind when we consider the implications of school exclusion and how by excluding a child from school, we are explicitly denying them access to their education. After coming across this quote during my literature search, it quickly became a contributory motivating factor throughout the research process.

My interest in school exclusions has been heavily influenced by my professional experiences both pre-Doctoral training and during. I have developed an understanding of the significance of school exclusion, in particular the impact it can have upon a young person’s educational outcomes and the implications it can have upon their families.

During the summer of 2017 my research topic of choice was further influenced by a documentary that I watched on Channel 4, titled *‘Excluded at 7’*. The documentary followed a group of Primary school children who had been PEX from school and were currently on a short-term placement in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). This programme brought to my attention that Primary school exclusions were increasing nationally and were becoming increasingly common, and that our education system often appears to be letting these children down.

What I found particularly powerful about this documentary was the opportunity we were given to listen to these young people talk about their exclusion from school and their feelings. We were introduced to one young boy called Harvey. When talking about being excluded from school Harvey said, *‘I got angry and I’ve turned into a monster’*. I was left wondering what this meant for Harvey and wanted to unpick further how he constructed these thoughts of himself. Harvey went on to reveal that he often felt lonely at school and other children would often say nasty things about him, Harvey said that this made him want to break stuff and punch stuff. Suddenly as

viewers we were starting to develop a deeper understanding of how Harvey has been experiencing school. However, it is important to remain reflective upon the nature of this evidence, and the trustworthiness and ethical nature of the information gathered for the purpose of a television documentary.

Following this documentary, I was left feeling inspired by the importance of listening to CYP and was fascinated by the idea that CYP can provide valuable insights on situations we as adults perceive as complex. Yet, it has been my experience that we often build systems around CYP with the intention of supporting them, however the experiences and feelings of these CYP are seldom considered. My values and beliefs tell me that we should be hearing the voices of CYP to help inform our understanding of multifaceted issues that involve them, to enable us to better support them and give them the best possible chances to achieve positive outcomes in their lives. My social constructionist positioning that believes that knowledge is subjectively constructed and based on unique experiences has further influenced the design of this study.

Educational Psychologists (EPs) are positioned well to be able to support change at a systems level, by working with key professionals to develop and review education policy and practices, in particular around inclusion and behaviour, and therefore this makes EPs positively placed to support the reduction of school exclusions (Hatton, 2013). EPs can also support school staff directly, by providing training on the needs of vulnerable CYP, and by offering them guidance on creating inclusive school environments to support the needs of these vulnerable CYP (Hatton, 2013).

Therefore, the outcomes of this study should help better inform EPs in providing an evidence base to guide their interventions when promoting inclusion in schools.

1.3 Research context

I will now provide some context of the research and why this topic is relevant within the current context.

The law states that pupils can experience fixed term exclusions (FEXs) and PEXs from state funded Primary, Secondary and Special Schools (DfE, 2017). There are approximately 40 PEXs across England per day. Although 83% of these exclusions were recorded to occur in Secondary schools, PEXs in Primary and Special schools are seeing a significant increase. Whilst school exclusions are an integral part of England's school behaviour management policy, the outcomes for children who

experience school exclusion remain poor (DfE, 2019). For example, statistics from 2015/16 show that of children who reach the end of key stage 4, just 7% of those who had a PEX and 18% who experienced several FEXs went on to achieve good passes in their General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) English and maths (DfE, 2019). This is concerning when we know that poor educational outcomes are likely to impact upon the quality of future life experiences.

A recent review entitled '*Timpson review of school exclusions*', was commissioned by the Secretary of Education, following the Prime Minister's announcement to review the use of school exclusions and the varying degrees to which they occur across minority groups (DfE, 2019). Since publication of this review the government have responded, stating that they believe that each child deserves to have access to an 'excellent education' and therefore propose to launch a consultation to ensure that changes are made to guarantee greater accountability around the use of school exclusions later this year (DfE, 2019). Although it is positive to see school exclusions feature as part of the government agenda, it is important to acknowledge that these claims have been made during a time of political uncertainty.

1.4 Research aims and questions

My proposed research questions have been influenced by my research aims; to better understand the school experiences of a population of young people, age 7 to 11 years, who have been identified by their school as being at risk of PEX. I wanted to identify factors that may contribute to them being at risk of PEX, what factors of school are important to them and what might be able to support them, to better inform intervention practices. It was hoped that findings would be influential upon future interventions, to try and achieve better future outcomes for this cohort of CYP.

IPA studies construct research questions that are broad and open and allow for the flexible exploration of a particular issue (Smith and Osborn, 2003). I have identified one overarching research question and have broken this down in to four sub questions.

- ❖ How do young people age 7 to 11 years, identified as being at risk of PEX by their school, talk about their school experiences?
 - What are the perceived barriers in school for young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX?

- What do young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX think helps/could help them in school?
- What are the important aspects of school for young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX?
- How do young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX feel in school?

1.6 Structure of research

This research will be presented in distinct chapters with the aim to systematically guide the reader through the study.

Literature review	The aim of this review is to present an overview of the literature that is most relevant in illuminating the context of school exclusions. This chapter will critically evaluate the evidence base related to school exclusion and will highlight the role of pupil voice in helping to reduce school exclusion rates. The review will explain how this research aims to further contribute to the current research base and how it hopes to promote improved outcomes for CYP identified as being AROSE.
Methodology	Within this chapter I will discuss and consider the methodology used within this research. In doing so, I will firstly consider the concept of qualitative research practice and will address how we can ensure quality and ethical practice within qualitative research. I will then discuss the philosophical underpinnings and theoretical stance of the research and I will also speak in depth about my chosen methodology, recognising its potential benefits and limitations. I will outline my chosen research design, the methods used for data collection and procedures followed during data analysis. This will be followed by an in-depth reflection of the ethical practice considered within this research.

Findings	<p>Within this chapter I will share my research findings following an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the data. The findings in this section will be presented in relation to each of the four master themes identified. I will consider each of the identified themes across the participant group as a whole, to allow for a holistic understanding of each of the themes and a deeper consideration as to how they relate to their experiences of school.</p>
Discussion	<p>This chapter will explore the current research findings in relation to each of the proposed research questions, drawing upon the themes that have been identified throughout Chapter 4. The findings will also be considered in relation to the existing literature that has been considered in detail in Chapter 2. This chapter will then conclude with a summary of key issues to consider from the discussion.</p>
Conclusion	<p>Within this final chapter I will appraise the study's unique contribution to knowledge and will consider the implications for EPs and EP practice. I will use this chapter to review the strengths and limitations and will provide some reflections on the research process. I will then end with a chapter summary and my concluding comments on the study and its outcomes.</p>

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature related to school exclusions and will:

- Highlight the significance of school exclusions as a topic.
- Outline the legal framework that governs school exclusions and present the context of school exclusions.
- Specifically look at Primary school exclusions and their significance in the current context.
- Address some of the outcomes for children who have been excluded from school.
- Consider in detail why schools exclude CYP and what contributes to this decision.
- Examine some of the risk and protective factors that might be influential upon a young person becoming 'at risk' of school exclusion.
- Consider how we might work to reduce school exclusion rates.
- Critically examine some of the literature on pupil voice to see how this may have a role in informing future practice when supporting CYP who are AROSE.

2.2 Aims of the review

The aims of this review are to present an overview of the literature that is most relevant in illuminating the context of school exclusions, and to critically evaluate the evidence base related to school exclusion, paying consideration to why CYP are being excluded from school, what risk factors may contribute to CYP being excluded from school and will consider how we might try and reduce school exclusion levels. This review will also explore literature on pupil voice and consider how pupil voice might be useful in helping to reduce school exclusion rates. The review will explain how this research aims to contribute to the current research base and how it hopes to contribute towards improved outcomes for CYP identified as being AROSE.

2.2 Systematic literature review

A systematic literature review allows for an exhaustive search of the current evidence relating to a specific research topic and allows all the available evidence to be considered. I chose to use a total of five electronic databases; PSYCHINFO, BEI

(British Education Index), ERIC, Education Abstracts and Teacher Reference Centre. I decided to use these databases which I felt were most relevant to my thesis topic. Each search of the literature started with a broad search term. This search term was placed in to the database and the number of articles found was recorded. To refine the search further additional search terms were combined and, again, the number of results was recorded. Article titles were then checked for their relevance. After further refinement of the search when a smaller number of articles had been found the abstracts or full articles were read and the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied.

A set of inclusion/exclusion criteria were used to further refine literature relevant to this study. Initially I conducted the literature search from 2005 until the present day. However, whilst initially scanning the literature I found that the 1990's was a significant period for school exclusions, and therefore I decided to expand my literature search and conducted a second literature search between 1990 and 2005. I limited the literature included to studies conducted within the UK only, due to the differences in policy, legislation and practice within education systems across countries, which will likely reflect a significant difference in how schools use exclusions. However, my searches identified some non-UK research studies related to behavioural difficulties within school, which were found to be particularly relevant and have therefore been included in this review.

A summary of the full inclusion/exclusion criteria used to refine the literature included can be found in the table below.

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
	Is the study...	The study...
Context	Focussed on school/education? Focussed on fixed term or permanent school exclusions? Related to school experience for children/young people? Focussed on pupil views or pupil voice?	Is not related to school/education. Does not focus on permanent or fixed term exclusions. Is focused on post-16 education.
Time/place	Conducted in the UK? Written in English?	Is not conducted in the UK. Is not written in English.

	Published since 2005 (search 1)? Published since 1990 (search 2)?	Is published prior to 2005 (search 1). Is published prior to 1990 (search 2).
Type of study	Full text? Qualitative/mixed methods in its design?	Is not full text e.g. abstract only. Is quantitative in its design.

Table 1: Systematic literature search inclusion/exclusion criteria

A list of the databases, search terms used, details of refinement and the results found are available in Appendix 1.

Sullivan (2010) introduced the term ‘snowball reviewing’ adapted from Bryman (2001). This term refers to the Identification of relevant literature that have been referenced or cited within key pieces of research. This technique of ‘snowball reviewing’ has been used to support my systematic literature review and identify further relevant texts. A search was also conducted a literature search within the journal ‘Educational Psychology in Practice’. These searches were repeated several times during the research to ensure that literature consulted remained up to date.

A number of questions were established which aimed to guide the review of the literature. These questions were:

- What does the current data tell us about school exclusions?
- What policy and framework govern school exclusions?
- What do we know about the current context of school exclusions?
- What are the key theories/models/concepts?
- What is being done to support school exclusions?
- Why are children and young people being excluded from school?
- What do children feel contributes to their exclusion from school?

This review starts by providing an explanation of the key terminology and definitions used within the study. It then presents the current policy and procedure of school exclusion and provides an overview of exclusions in context. The review then critically explores the use of exclusions and their outcomes for CYP. The review also highlights some of the risk factors that make some groups of young people more susceptible to being excluded from school than others and looks at the literature on pupil voice and explores the significance of hearing the voices of CYP within research and specifically in reducing school exclusions.

At the end of this chapter I provide a summary of the literature review and highlight any gaps that have been established within the literature. I then go on to explain how this piece of research hopes to contribute to the existing gaps in the literature and concludes with my identified research questions.

2.3 Key terminology and definitions

It is important to establish the key terms and definitions used so that there is a clear understanding when these terms are used throughout the study. This can be difficult to establish when a plethora of terms have been used when talking about school exclusions and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The term 'exclusion' became more commonly used following the introduction of the 1986 Education Act (Hayden, 1995). Today schools officially use two types of exclusions. These are 'permanent exclusions' (PEX) and 'fixed term exclusions' (FEX), which are also referred to as 'fixed period' exclusions.

PEX refers to when a pupil is taken off their schools roll and are not allowed to return to the excluding school (unless the exclusion is overturned) (DfE, 2017b). Following a PEX the home LA is responsible for providing alternative education for that young person following the sixth day of exclusion.

FEX refers to when a pupil is excluded from school for a specified amount of time. A FEX may involve a pupil missing just part of the school day and does not need to happen for a continued period of time. A pupil can legally be excluded for one or more fixed periods, but FEXs must not exceed 45 school days within one academic year (DfE, 2017b).

Another type of exclusion commonly referenced is 'unofficial exclusion', also referred to as 'informal exclusion'. An 'unofficial exclusion' refers to a time when a pupil has time off school, as advised by the school, but this is never officially recorded (Hayden, 1995). In the past it has often been felt that these types of exclusions exist more frequently than officially documented exclusions (Stirling, 1991). 'Unofficial exclusions' are considered unlawful, despite agreement from parents or carers (DfE, 2017b).

Social emotional and mental health (SEMH) is a term that was introduced in the SEND Code of Practice (2014) and replaced the pre-existing term behavioural emotional and social difficulties (BESD) and emotional and behavioural difficulties

(EBD). The term SEMH refers to a type of special educational need (SEN) where a child likely communicates through behaviour as a result of unmet social emotional and/or mental health needs. The term SEMH eliminates the word 'behaviour' to allow practitioners to change their focus from observed behaviour to the young person's unmet needs. Throughout this study I will predominantly use the term SEMH, however when discussing literature published pre-2014 the terms BESD and EBD may still be used.

2.4 School exclusion

2.4.1 The significance of school exclusion

When the UK Labour Government came into power in 1997, one of their key government policies was to ensure social justice and equality for all. With regards to education, this meant a drive towards a more inclusive schooling system, giving rights to all children, specifically those with SEN, allowing them the right to be educated within mainstream schools (Goodman and Burton, 2010).

The recognition of 'inclusive education' became significant following the dramatic increase of school exclusions within the UK during the 1990's (Shearman, 2003). The drive for more inclusive practices within our UK schools saw changes to several policy documents, which aimed to support children with additional needs, allowing them to be educated within mainstream settings (Goodman and Burton, 2010). However, to include and value all CYP within an increasingly competitive education system, sat within a society that continues to build both social and economic pressures, was not going to come without its challenges (Booth et al., 1998 as cited in Shearman, 2003).

To exclude a child from school goes against the foundations of inclusion and does not conform with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In particular, the process of school exclusion within the UK continues to breach children's rights regarding Article 3 of the UNCRC, which states that the interests of the child should be considered when decisions are being made about them. The DfE (2017b) does state that CYP who are excluded from school should participate and be included at all stages during the exclusion process, however it is unclear to what extent this currently happens.

Given that every child has a right to access education (Spring, 2000, Harris et al., 2000 as cited in Maguire et al., 2003), UK policy encourages schools to work to

support any young person who may be deemed at risk of exclusion (Maguire et al., 2003), and this places a big responsibility on schools in trying to educate a diverse and often complex group of CYP (Goodman and Burton, 2010).

2.4.2 Policy and procedure (legal framework)

The policy of school exclusion is firmly sanctioned in law (Hayden, 1995). The DfE (2017b) provides guidance to the legislation that governs school exclusions in England. This refers to exclusions from maintained schools, PRU's, academy schools and alternative provision academies (DfE, 2017b). A young person can legally be PEX from school, or they can receive a FEX for one or more days, however a FEX cannot exceed 45 days within one academic year (DfE, 2012; 2017b). All schools must formally record any incident of school exclusion (DfE, 2017b).

The DfE (2017b) guidance draws attention to section 51A of the Education Act (2002) and clearly states that it is only the Head teacher of a school that can make the decision to exclude a pupil. The Head teacher is supported in using exclusion as a sanction where it is rightly warranted (DfE, 2017b). The document outlines that an exclusion must be given on disciplinary grounds and it would be deemed unlawful to exclude a pupil for a non-disciplinary reason (DfE, 2017b). A PEX must only be given as a last resort, in response to serious or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy, and where the pupils presence in school would jeopardise the welfare of them or other pupils within the school (DfE, 2017b), as all children have the right to be educated within safe environments (UNCRC, 1989).

Above all however, the DfE (2017b) guidance states that a head teacher should ensure that their decision to exclude, either permanently or temporarily, should be fair, rationale, reasonable and lawful. However, policies and practices between schools can differ and evidence of school exclusions throughout the 1990's has shown that PEX has not always been used as a last resort (Gordon, 2001). Education policy aims to promote inclusive practices in schools, yet research suggests that there is great variation in their implementation, which is further evidenced in the continuously high exclusion rates (Goodman and Burton, 2010).

I have provided an understanding of the policy and framework that guides school exclusion in the UK, and in the following section I will provide a cohesive summary of the context of school exclusions within England.

2.4.3 The context of school exclusions

The topic of school exclusions is not a new phenomenon (Hayden, 1995) and exclusion from school is now deemed a 'normal' process within the UK education system. However, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales exclude at much lower rates than in England (Parsons, 1999 as cited in Parsons, 2005). Although exclusions in Wales are governed by the same legislations as in England, Scotland is different, where the power to exclude lies with the education authority as opposed to the head teacher (Panayiotopoulos and Kerfoot, 2007).

In England during the 1990's there was an increased concern and a growth in government and research interest around school exclusions, likely due to the significant rise in their occurrence (Hayden, 1995). From 1990 to 1998 exclusions rose from 3,000 to nearly 13,000 (Maguire et al., 2003) and was considered a 'crisis point' within education in England (Panayiotopoulos and Kerfoot 2007). Maguire et al. (2003) used the term 'exclusion' here to refer to the use of permanent school exclusions. However, the generic term 'exclusion' is often used throughout the literature with little clarity of its specific meaning. This is particularly noticeable during earlier literature from the 1990's which followed the introduction of the new term 'exclusion', which replaced subsequent terms, 'suspension' and 'expulsion' from school (Maguire et al., 2003). This can present challenges when trying to synthesise the evidence base around school exclusions.

Robinson (1998) reports that there were many contributing factors associated with the dramatic increase in school exclusion rates in the 1990's. For example, school based, or market led factors, as well as within child, medical, family and community factors (Hayden, 1997; Robinson, 1998). Robinson (1998) importantly highlighted that the contributing factors were likely complex, and each circumstance would be a unique interaction between several of the factors mentioned above. Yet, it is arguable that such an increase cannot predominantly be attributed to the professional political context.

Due to concerns raised about the reliability of exclusion data both during and prior to the 1990's, 2005 saw a more standardised approach to the collection of exclusion data across England (Hatton, 2013). Interestingly from this date, the DfE (2012a) reported a noticeable reduction in exclusion figures (Hatton, 2013). By 2010, both PEXs and FEXs had seen a steady decline.

However, following years of decline, 2013/2014 saw exclusion rates start to rise. This rise in exclusions may be as a result of schools more rigidly following formal recording processes, as opposed to an actual increase in behavioural concerns, yet above all we cannot be certain of the exact reasons (DfE, 2019).

Figure 1 and figure 2 below show PEX and FEX trends from 1997/8 to 2016/7 (DfE, 2019).

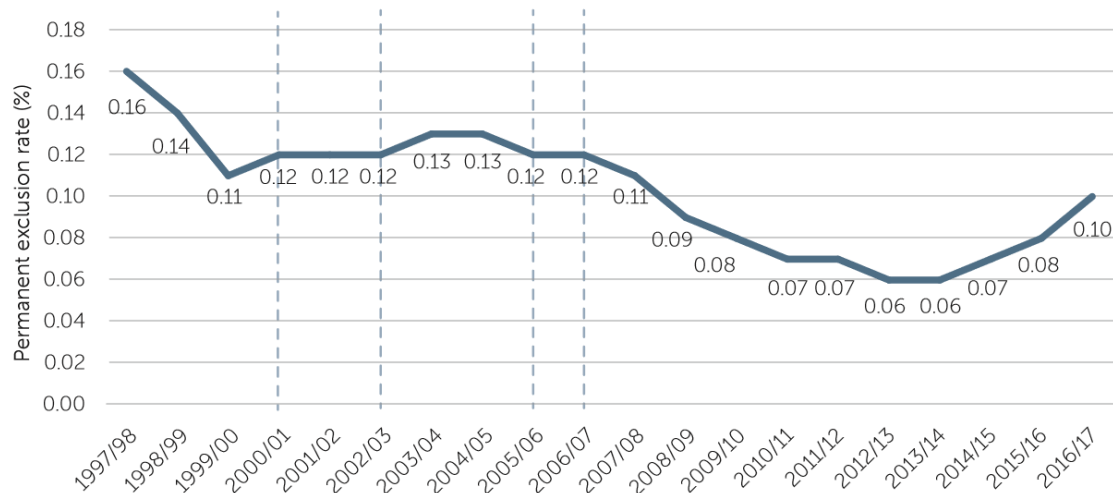


Figure 1: Permanent exclusion time series for all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools. (Changes in methodology marked as dashed lines mean this is not a continuous time series⁵)

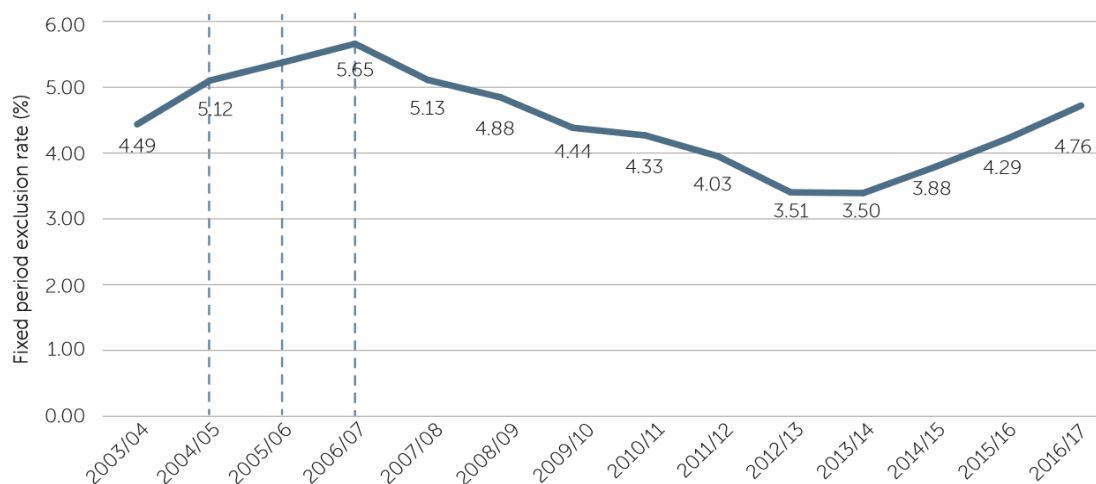


Figure 2: Fixed period exclusion time series for all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools. (Changes in methodology marked as dashed lines mean this is not a continuous time series⁵)

At the time of writing this chapter, recent data by the DfE (2017a, 2018) report that PEX rates increased from 0.07% to 0.08% from 2014/15 to 2015/16 and increased again from 0.08% to 0.10% from 2015/16 to 2016/17. The number of pupils who were

PEX from state-funded Primary, Secondary and Special schools was seen to increase from 5,795 in 2014/15 to 6,685 pupils in 2015/16, to 7,720 pupils in 2016/17. Of PEXs recorded, 83% occurred within Secondary schools. Secondary school exclusions increased from 0.17% to 0.20%, an equivalent of 20 in everyone 10,000 pupils. The rate of PEXs within Primary schools rose at a significant rate of 0.03%, which is highly concerning, yet Special schools saw a positive decrease in PEX rates from 0.08% to 0.07%.

FEXs saw a rise of 3.8% to 4.29% from 2014/15 to 2015/16 and of 4.29% to 4.76% from 2015/16 to 2016/17 (DfE, 2017a, 2018). The number of pupils who were excluded from state-funded Primary, Secondary and Special schools, for a fixed period increased from 302,975 to 339,360 in 2015/16 and to 381,865 in 2016/17. In the academic year 2016/2017, Secondary school FEXs increased from 8.46% to 9.4%, Primary schools saw an increase from 1.21% to 1.37%, and Special schools also saw an increase from 12.53% to 13.03% (DfE, 2018).

Currently, on average, 40 children receive a PEX and 2,000 children receive a FEX each day in England (DfE, 2019). There are of course variations in exclusion rates and statistics across LAs and these differences were reflected in the recent DfE (2019) review document. These differences are likely due to challenges in relation to locality areas, policy and practice (DfE, 2019).

The expectation in the UK is that the DfE collects, analyses and reports on the data of PEXs and FEXs annually (Children's Commissioner, 2012). However, the accuracy of these formal statistics is still questioned due to the likely occurrence of unofficial practices. Therefore, statistics may be falsely represented due to exclusions not being accurately recorded, parents being instructed to take their child off school roll or children being guided to take absences from school and therefore should be used with caution (Hatton, 2013). However, whether accurate or not, the data implies a high level of exclusions, and what also is concerning is the level of vulnerability amongst the excluded population (DfE, 2019), particularly given the increased prevalence of complex needs amongst today's society.

Today, issues surrounding school exclusions remain complex. It is reported that more and more children are becoming disengaged from their education, due to the narrowing curriculum and schools predominant focus on preparation for tests and

examinations. The government in England have often been blamed for creating a quasi-market with state education, yet this introduction of quasi-markets has not been correlated to the rise in school exclusions (Hayden, 1995). However, schools remain so heavily judged on results, outcomes and raising academic standards (Maguire et al., 2003), and children with difficulties and additional needs sometimes appear to have little value in this market, which may contribute to them being excluded from education. Head teachers however have expressed that lack of resource and sufficient support makes it impossible to always provide the support children need, often leaving them with no option but to remove these pupils from their schools (OFSTED, 2009).

Behaviour and discipline in schools is an issue that has remained significant in the UK, in particular following publication of the Elton Report, 'Discipline in Schools' (DES, 1989) (Trotman, 2015). The process of school exclusion is a punitive approach to behaviour and has been embedded within the English education system for a substantial amount of time and is now an accepted and normalised approach to disciplining pupils (Gazeley et al., 2015). As previously mentioned, UK policy encourages schools to support CYP AROSE to avoid the use of exclusion, however historically it has often been felt that this has not been happening and schools have not been attempting to support these CYP as they could be (Maguire et al., 2003).

Recent figures from DfE (2018) report that persistent disruptive behaviour is the most common reason for a PEX from a state-funded Primary and Secondary school and accounted for 35.7% of all PEXs in 2016/17. The most common reason for a PEX from a Special school is physical assault on an adult and accounted for 37.8% of PEXs from Special schools in 2016/17 (DfE, 2018). Persistent disruptive behaviour is also the most common reason for all FEXs from state-funded Primary, Secondary and Special schools, and accounted for 28.4% of all FEXs in 2016/17 (DfE, 2018). Complete statistics for all recorded PEXs and FEXs in 2016/17 are represented in the charts below. These statistics however are limited in offering trusted insights into school exclusions due to the nature in which the data is likely collected from schools, yet they are useful in providing an approximation of exclusions in the current context.

Chart 1: Reasons for PEXs

England, Academic years 2015/16, 2016/17

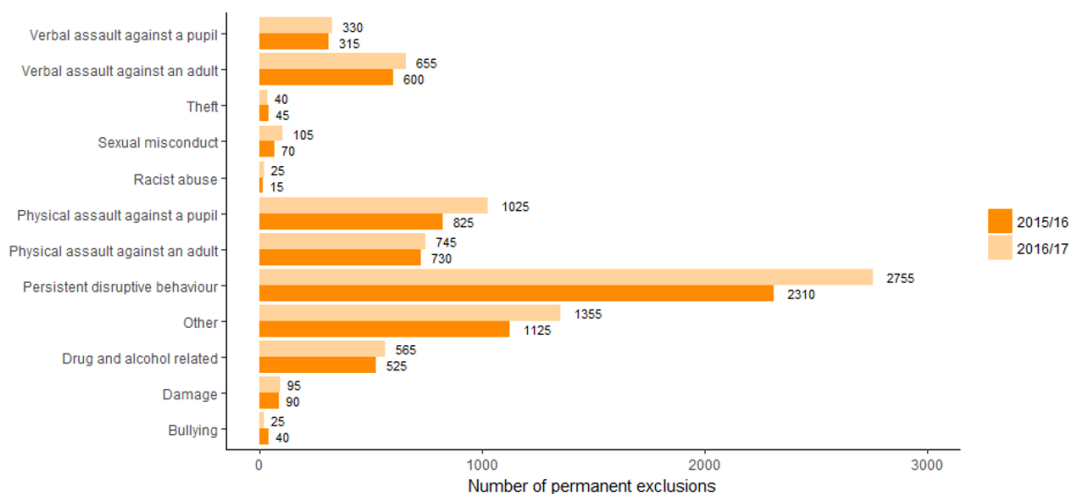
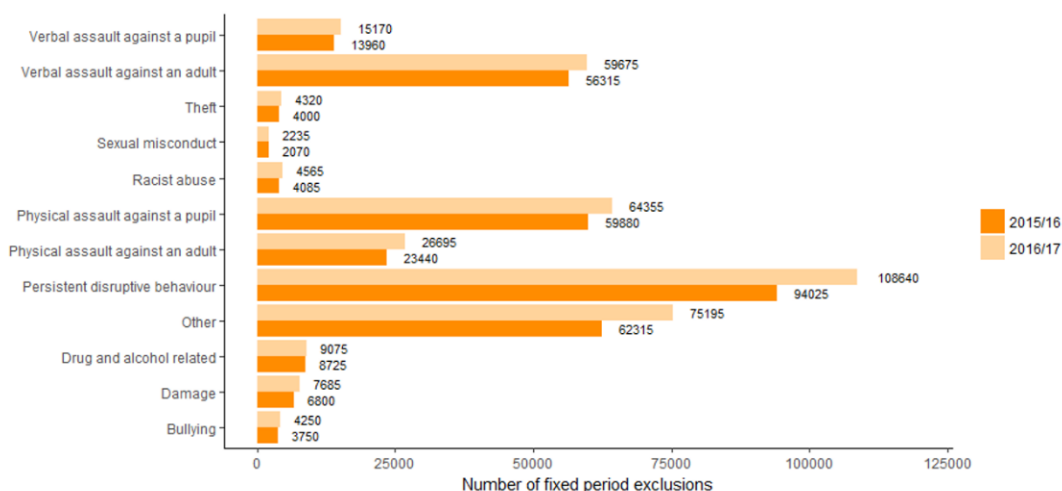


Chart 2: Reasons for FEXs

England, Academic years 2015/16, 2016/17



In the following section I will spend time looking at the outcomes associated with CYP who have experienced an exclusion from school.

2.5 What are the outcomes for children who have been excluded from school?

“Exclusions carry heavy penalties for us all. They damage children’s education and their future, while parents are left having to drop everything, including their work, at short notice. Society also pays for exclusion through the high costs of alternative

education programmes and increased crime as disaffected children from school come out on to the streets”

(Ian Sparks, Chief Executive of the Children’s Society as cited in Gordon, 2001)

Exclusion from school completely undermines the rights of CYP to have access to an education (OCC, 2012; Osler and Vincent, 2003; Parsons, 2005 as cited in Gazeley et al., 2015), as many children who are excluded from school can disappear from the education system for significant periods of time (Hallam and Castle, 2001). Many of the children being excluded from school are already extremely vulnerable members of the community and it is likely that school exclusion will only make their circumstances worse (Hallam and Castle, 2001).

The process of school exclusion is highly complex and is associated with many different outcomes, not only for the CYP, but also their families and society (Gazeley, 2010). Exclusion refers to the removal of a young person from school, either permanently or for a fixed period, as a disciplinary response from the head teacher in response to the occurrence of problem behaviour in school (Hatton, 2013). Exclusion from school signifies a time of considerable disruption for the excluded pupil and therefore unsurprisingly correlates with several significant adversities (Parker et al., 2016).

Again, given the often ‘lose’ use of the term ‘exclusion’, it can prove difficult when considering the evidence base when looking at the longer-term implications of school exclusion. Although the term ‘exclusion’ is consistently used to refer to the formal process of disciplinary exclusion (Hatton, 2013), often the literature uses the term ‘exclusion’ when referring to both PEX and FEX and does not always provide an explicit distinction between the two. It therefore is important to use the term ‘exclusion’ with caution when considering the evidence base and identifies the need to be more explicit when we talk about the nature of school exclusions to avoid any possible misconceptions.

The growing concern about school exclusion, specifically from the government, are in part fuelled by their financial burdens (DfE, 2019). Exclusions can be expensive in terms of associated administrative costs, the costs of funding placements, alongside resources and transport needed to educate children within alternative educational provision (DfE, 2019). However, although there are considerable financial

implications, of greater concern is the impact that school exclusions have upon the CYP who have been excluded, particularly given the significant role school has in both the academic and social development of CYP (Sellstrom and Bremberg, 2006, as cited in Parker et al., 2016).

The safety of CYP as stipulated within the Children Act (1989) should be paramount, however, does the process of excluding children from school, particularly children who are already deemed as extremely vulnerable contradict this (Maguire et al., 2003)? Controversially Jull (2008) considers the justifications of exclusion, stating exclusion could likely have a positive impact upon other pupils in school who may have been exposed to undesirable behaviours, she also feels that time away from school could benefit the inclusion of the excluded child in the longer-term.

However, the outcomes for those excluded from school are often poor (DfE, 2019), and the concerns associated with their damaging impact are both extensive and have existed for a long time (Gazeley et al., 2015). Lannegrand-Willem and Bosma (2006) found that school experience and its context can influence upon CYP's self-image and identity, and therefore significant disruption of school both during the period leading up to an exclusion, and the exclusion itself could negatively impact upon how a young person constructs an identity of themselves, which will likely have both short term and long term implications associated with a negative self-perception.

Hayden (1997) reported that CYP who have a history of school exclusion are likely to experience continued difficulties throughout their educational life and Hallam and Castle (2001) reported that only 15% of CYP who were PEX from school were likely to ever return to mainstream education. Parsons et al. (2001) conducted a longitudinal study and followed up, through case records 726 children who had either been PEX or FEX from school during 1993/4 across ten UK LAs, six years later. Although there were some gaps in the data due to the challenges in tracking pupils over time, Parsons et al. (2001) found that the outcomes for this cohort in Secondary education were moderately poor, with participants continuing to experience some level of school exclusion throughout their education and/or have multi-agency involvement. Although this is only one research study portraying outcomes for a now dated cohort of young people, it does provide evidence that children who have experienced an exclusion from school are likely to experience ongoing difficulties.

Recent data indicates that overall achievement levels of children who have been excluded from school are consistently lower than their non-excluded peers. They are less likely to access higher education and are likely to have a history of poor or irregular employment (McCluskey et al., 2016) and over a third are not in education, employment or training (NEET) post compulsory school age (DfE, 2019). Daniels and Cole (2010) found that very few achieved a wide range of GCSE qualifications. However, although exclusion is said to hinder future employment, they did report that 62% of young people who had been excluded during years 10 or 11 of school had experienced some paid employment, yet many had very limited and unclear ideas about their future (Daniels and Cole, 2010).

School exclusion can also correlate to child health (Parker and Ford, 2013 as cited in Paget et al. 2018). For example, it can have short term psychological implications (McDonald and Thomas, 2003; Parker, Paget, Ford and Gwernan-Jones, 2016; Quin and Hemphill, 2014; Smith, 2009 as cited in Paget et al., 2018), and longer-term implications associated with both poor mental and physical health (Daniels and Cole, 2010). School exclusion is also strongly associated with future substance abuse, antisocial behaviour, crime, low educational attainment, unemployment, homelessness, exclusion from social society (Daniels and Cole, 2010; Paget, 2017; DfE, 2019), and ultimately reduces the life chances of these CYP (McCluskey et al., 2016). Therefore, it is unsurprising that there is a growing emphasis on trying to find alternatives to school exclusion to try and minimise its associated negative outcomes (Gazeley, 2010).

It is important to recognise that children who are excluded from school likely have other associated difficulties that could also contribute to their poorer outcomes, and therefore we cannot assume exclusion is the root cause, but poorly managed exclusions can lead to considerable disruption and should be recognised as one indicator among others (DfE, 2019). This section concludes that the outcomes for CYP excluded from school can be poor and therefore more needs to be done to support schools in being able to better meet the needs of their pupils to reduce the use of exclusions (DfE, 2019).

2.6 Why do schools exclude?

Considering the poor outcomes associated with school exclusion, I will now take time to address some of the reasons why schools continue to exclude.

Maguire et al. (2003) report findings from the DfE (1998) that suggested large differences in the rates of school exclusions across different LAs within the UK and it is likely this is still the case. In the 1970's and 1980's research aimed to find out what influenced school exclusion rates, specifically to find out if school intake factors or school processes were more of a contributing factor (Vulliamy and Webb, 2000). Although this research is now dated, McLean (1987) found that a high disadvantaged school had low exclusion rates and concluded that it was the school's person-centred approaches to pupil behaviour that accounted for this and therefore believed that schools have the ability to lower their exclusion rates if they adapt policy and procedure to work in a more child centred way (Vulliamy and Webb, 2000).

However, OFSTED (1996) reported that the socio-economic location of a school was comparable with its rates of exclusion (Vulliamy and Webb, 2000), however, the point at which a school will exclude is also likely influenced by their values and their individual behavioural policy (DfE, 2019), because whilst some schools report trying to avoid using exclusions, others believe that exclusions are necessary to achieve positive inclusivity for the wider school community (DfE, 2019). School exclusion rates are also likely impacted by the disparity in what constitutes as 'reasonable behaviour' by individual schools and their staff (Goodman and Burton, 2010).

Given the large proportion of children with additional needs that face school exclusions, Robinson (1998) feels that CYP are often excluded from school due to their additional needs that teachers and school staff are often left ill-equipped to effectively manage. Goodman and Burton (2010) confirm that teachers in our UK schools often have limited training in supporting pupils with complex needs and many staff in schools are unable to understand the difference between 'poor' and 'disturbed' behaviour (Panayiotopoulos and Kerfoot, 2007). By having a poor understanding of behaviour, a punitive approach, like that of exclusion, is relied upon which sees CYP being repeatedly and controversially punished for their actions (Hatton, 2013).

We can consider schools as the formal agents of exclusion, where they could either be inclusive or exclusionary (Slee, 1995; Booth, 1996; Parsons, 1999; Munn et al., 2000 as cited in Munn and Lloyd, 2005). Ultimately it is undeniable that both Head teachers and governing bodies of schools hold a lot of power in their decisions around school exclusions. Wright et al. (2000) believe that this might give schools the

power to become somewhat selective. There is no doubt that this will likely be influenced by the pressures that schools are under to meet proposed academic targets. These academic pressures mean that schools are often not able to allocate the necessary time and resource to children with additional learning needs (Rustique-Forrester 2000; Macrae et al., 2003), and inadvertently, schools are often putting school performance ahead of children's needs (Gewirtz et al., 1993, Ball 1998). This was highlighted in the Social Exclusion Unit (1998) who found that performance targets were a contributing factor in the rise of school exclusions in the late 1990's (Macrae et al., 2003). However, Gordon (2001) presented a contradiction to this and said that schools were not excluding more because of academic pressures, but instead schools often have to resort to exclusion because of the increasing level of intimidating and violent behaviour of their pupils that poses a risk to staff and pupil safety.

2.7 What are the risk factors and protective factors associated with school exclusion?

The issue of school exclusion is complex, and several factors likely occur at an individual, school and family level which contribute to a young person becoming excluded from school. It is important that we develop our understanding of the factors that occur across these three levels which may act as risk factors or protective factors to school exclusion.

2.7.1 Within child factors

Within this section I will specifically look at the individual characteristics that are suggestive of CYP being placed at higher risk of school exclusion.

The research has demonstrated that school exclusion is disproportionately experienced by certain groups of CYP (Munn and Lloyd, 2005), and exclusion rates can vary in relation to individual characteristics (DfE, 2019). Exclusion rates should be monitored for their inequalities by schools and LAs within England, however patterns of overrepresentation are not always fully recognised due to the often individualised as opposed to systemic perspective taken within education systems (Gillborn and Youdell, 2000 as cited in Gazeley et al., 2015).

There remain patterns of overrepresentation in exclusion statistics particularly with regards to gender, ethnicity and social class (Gazeley et al., 2015). The literature frequently reports the overrepresentation of boys than girls among exclusion

statistics (DfE, 2019), with boys three times more likely to be excluded from schools than girls (McCluskey et al., 2016). The picture presented around ethnicity and school exclusion is complex, with some ethnic groups such as Bangladeshi and Indian being associated with lower exclusion rates, and black Caribbean and mixed white and black Caribbean being more highly represented (DfE, 2019). The DfE (2019) review reported that 78% of CYP PEX had SEN, social care involvement or were eligible for free school meals, and 11% of exclusions were given to CYP who had all three of these characteristics (DfE, 2019). These findings highlight factors of gender, ethnicity, social class and SEN as having strong correlations to school exclusion. However, the accuracy of statistics are continually questioned due to the prevalence of inaccurate and falsely represented data (Hatton, 2013), and therefore we should approach these figures with some caution.

It has been widely documented that pupils who have been identified as having a SEN are at an increased risk of being excluded from school (Jull, 2008). Even children who do not hold a formal diagnosis at the time of their exclusion are often said to be awaiting a formal diagnosis or an assessment of SEN (Parker, 2016). Despite it being an unlawful act to exclude children from school as a result of their needs, figures show that children who have an identified SEN account for 7 out of 10 PEXs (Sproston et al., 2017), more specifically, 45% of children with a formal diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) have experienced an exclusion from school (Ambitious About Autism, 2016), and children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are five times more likely to experience a FEX than their peers with no EHCP (DfE, 2018).

A study by Parker et al. (2016) interviewed 35 parents of 37 children aged between 5 and 12 years who had experienced an exclusion from school and found that some of the children that had experienced an exclusion from school had a diagnosed disorder including Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) (Parker et al., 2016). Parents reported that some of the young people had specific learning difficulties like that of dyslexia and others reported ongoing problems with hearing, speech and language and combined physical health problems (Parker et al., 2016). DfE (2018) statistics show that children with moderate learning difficulties also have high exclusion rates. The literature further highlights the correlation between learning needs and behaviour, as children that find the curriculum to be inaccessible can

disengage from learning (Cefai and Cooper, 2010), and this is also likely influenced by an under attribution of their learning needs by school staff.

Law and Sivyer (2003) reported the significance of recognising early language and communication difficulties in children. Children use language and their ability to communicate as a principle means to express their emotions and feelings to those around them. The inability to successfully do this may result in them trying to express themselves through their behaviour (Law and Sivyer, 2003). Law and Sivyer (2003) felt that assessment and intervention should occur to identify and support communication and language before exclusion is considered.

Children with SEMH/BESD are reported to be the most strongly associated with PEXs and FEXs from school (DfE, 2019). Parents in Parker et al. (2016) identified children to have several underlying mental health issues such as anxiety, low mood and confidence, obsessive compulsive behaviours and attachment difficulties that impact on the ability of these CYP to be able to cope effectively in school. It is felt that behaviour displayed by CYP in school, who are AROSE, could therefore be as a result of underlying mental health needs that are not yet being recognised or understood by the relevant people (Parker et al., 2016).

These findings, although only representative of a small proportion of the literature, signify the high prevalence of SEN among the population of CYP excluded from school within the UK and highlight their vulnerabilities (Parker et al., 2016). These vulnerabilities are likely to negatively impact upon how these CYP engage within the school system (Cefai and Cooper, 2010).

2.7.2 Family and external factors

The literature has shown the importance of both family and external factors and their impact upon school exclusion.

Munn and Lloyd (2005) consulted three separate small-scale projects; Munn et al. (2000), Lloyd et al. (2001); and Lloyd and Peacock (2001) which gathered the views of CYP about their experience of school exclusion, including reasons and consequences for the exclusion, and their opinions of school. In this instance the term 'exclusion' is used as a collective term likely to refer to incidents of PEX and FEX, however Munn et al. (2005) have not been explicit about this and therefore to some extent jeopardise the clarity of the research findings. Although these studies

were conducted almost two decades ago, and are not representative of the current climate, Munn and Lloyd (2005) interestingly identified a common theme related to school exclusion as being difficulties CYP experience at home. Specifically, many had parents who were experiencing drug addiction, were young carers, had witnessed domestic violence and generally had experienced stressful home lives (Munn and Lloyd, 2005). One pupil interviewed said “it’s quite hard because I’ve got problems at home and that, so it’s quite hard to concentrate – but I do my best. Even though teachers and that say ‘oh he doesn’t try’ but I think I do my best” (Munn and Lloyd, 2005).

Parker et al.’s (2016) more recent findings also recognised that family circumstances can act as possible risk factors to school exclusion. In particular, parents talked about alcohol misuse, chronic illness, disability, multiple house moves and bereavement as negative family and home factors. This highlights the impact that stressors within the family home can have upon the behaviours of CYP, and that CYP feel that school need to have a better understanding of home circumstances to ensure they are adequately supported (Munn and Lloyd, 2005).

2.7.3 School factors

There are several factors that occur within the school environment which are likely to be influential upon a young person becoming AROSE, however there is often less focus on the correlation between school factors and problem behaviour (Oldfield et al., 2016).

2.7.3i Relationships

Parker et al.’s (2016) findings highlight the significance of relationships within school and parents revealed how relationships can be influential upon a child’s behaviour. Parker et al. (2016) talk about the importance of adult-child relationships, specifically the relationship a child has with a teaching assistant. Parents described the teaching assistant as an important figure and were often the members of staff in school that their child spent most of their time with (Parker et al., 2016). However, the views of teaching assistants are mixed. To some extent teaching assistant support was viewed as helpful, when they knew the child well and were able to advocate for that child and implement and disseminate support strategies throughout the school, but was also viewed as unhelpful when they did not hold the necessary skills to manage the child’s complex needs (Parker et al., 2016).

Hajdukova et al. (2014) used in-depth, semi-structured and focus group interviews with 29 boys, between the ages of 9 and 13 years, in New Zealand, who were identified as having severe social emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). Although the study was conducted outside of England, it is useful in illuminating the school experiences of CYP who are experiencing SEBD. One of the key findings from Hajdukova et al.'s (2014) research was the topic of differential treatment, which appeared a prominent feature of CYP's schooling experience suggesting that the perceived or actual treatment from the class teacher could negatively impact upon behaviour. The boys reported feelings of frustration, anger and sadness and the use of extreme behaviour as a result of the actual or perceived unfair treatment expressed by the teacher. Pomeroy (1999), although dated also found that difficult relationships with teachers was a common factor that contributed towards exclusions from mainstream schools (Hajdukova et al., 2014).

Obsuth et al. (2017) used random control trials (RCT) with 644 pupils age between 12 and 15 years who were 'at risk' and found that the relationship between pupils and teachers was the strongest predictor of emotional well-being in school. This follows Robinson's (2014) review of the literature which also found that positive relationships amongst adults was significant in enabling Primary age children to enjoy school, achieve their potential and achieve a positive sense of security in their school environment. Therefore, these findings suggest that teachers can make contributions to pupil outcomes, despite often little consideration given to the role that teachers play in contributing to the difficulties CYP experience in school (Caslin, 2019).

Cefai and Cooper (2010) too found relationships to be significant in school. CYP with SEBD reported feeling victimised by their teachers and/or their peers and referred to frequent incidents of bullying. These poor relationships were quoted as contributing to the development of self-helplessness, a sense of failure and disempowerment (Cefai and Cooper, 2010). However, these findings were found from a small number of small-scale studies that all varied in quality of analysis and interpretation, results were also obtained from a Maltese population. Pereira and Lavoie (2018) interviewed Canadian CYP with EBD in mainstream settings and found the experience of bullying to be significant. These experiences of bullying had an impact upon CYP's sense of safety and self-worth and consequently upon their education (Pereira and Lavoie, 2018). It is important to consider that these findings came from a solely SEBD/EBD

population who had not specifically been identified as being AROSE, however, Parker et al. (2016) too identified that an excluded population had difficulties with their peer relationships and evidenced the prevalence of 'bullying'.

Berndt (2002) says that having positive experiences within a social network improves the school experience and helps to protect CYP from experiencing adversities within a school context (Banks et al., 2018). Banks et al. (2018) have also highlighted the correlation between CYP's self-concept and their peer relationships, because CYP will use the relationships they have with their peers as validation of their own self-image and identity. CYP with multiple SEN are at highest risk of developing negative peer relationships (Banks et al., 2018), which may therefore contribute to the adversities they experience in school.

The research also highlights the need for CYP to feel as if they 'belong'. A sense of belonging can be achieved through having friends, positive relationships with teachers, feeling valued and feeling their needs are understood (DfE, 2019b). The research suggests that a reduced sense of belonging can lead to CYP feeling disconnected in school (DfE, 2019b), and therefore further highlights the importance of CYP's relationships in school.

The literature tells us that social experiences are a significant part of CYP's schooling, and the school setting is an important arena in which they can create social relationships with their peers (Banks et al., 2018). However, it is unsurprising that some CYP can find it a challenge to navigate this social arena and develop meaningful friendships, and therefore it is likely that they need support within these complex social systems to improve their school experiences (Pereira and Lavoie, 2018).

2.7.3ii School ethos

The importance of school ethos was discussed as a factor during Parker et al.'s (2016) research. Although these findings are useful in illuminating the importance of school ethos, it is important to remember that these findings are based on the subjective opinions of parents and therefore should be used with some caution. Parents felt that the ethos of a school was detrimental in influencing how their child was able to 'fit' into a school, specifically, the attitudes towards their child, and a focus on expectations and outcomes (Parker et al., 2016). Parents identified factors such as physical space, the size of the school, and class context, such as class size,

staffing and classroom management as being responsible for either aggravating or facilitating their child's behaviour at school (Parker et al., 2016). Parents also spoke about the structure of the school day and identified 'unstructured' times as being a risk factor, where incidents more commonly occurred (Parker et al., 2016).

Hatton (2013) aimed to look at and explore the factors specifically associated with a school's ethos and how these factors may or may not contribute to the prevalence of school exclusions. Although caution should be taken in attempting to generalise these findings as there was variation in the demographics of the schools, and trustworthiness may be questioned due to the sometimes-inconsistent methods of data collection, the research suggested that a wide range of school factors likely contribute to levels of exclusion. For example; a rigorous and consistent behaviour policy, the use of rewards instead of sanctions and the adoption of a school culture which explicitly celebrates positive behaviour are likely to support inclusion within schools and found that school ethos had a significant role in successful inclusion in Primary schools within highly deprived areas (Hatton, 2013).

Much of the research that has focused on the risk factors and protective factors associated with the behavioural difficulties of CYP has tended to concentrate on both the individual and family level and have tended to focus less on the school-level characteristics, in particular school ethos, and how they might be related to problem behaviour in CYP (Oldfield et al., 2016). However, the literature discussed in this section has successfully identified risk factors and protective factors that are likely influential upon CYP's exclusion from school and the view emerging within the literature implies that exclusion from school may result as an interplay of different contributory factors that occur at individual, school, family and systemic levels, which impact upon CYP's ability to positively engage in and be successful in school (Parker et al., 2016).

Having looked at some of the risk and protective factors to school exclusion, I will now consider in more detail how schools might work towards reducing school exclusion rates.

2.8 Working to reduce school exclusion

There are claims that school exclusion is an ineffective way of improving behaviour, and one that will likely cause CYP to become even more disaffected (Barnardos, 2010). Although there has been some reduction in the level of school exclusions as a

result of the Labour government's introduction of managed moves to offer children a 'fresh' chance, and better joined up working across outside agencies, it is concerning that exclusions are happening as a result of persistent disruptive behaviour, and the rise in FEXs in response to persistent disruptive behaviour is evidence for its ineffectiveness as a long-term intervention (Barnardos, 2010). Butler and Green (1998) believe that all observed behaviour will make sense to whom that behaviour belongs, and Beaver (1996) feels that we therefore need to develop our understanding of how behaviours are making sense to CYP exhibiting the behaviours, because without this we cannot possibly understand why the behaviour is occurring (as cited in Hardman, 2001).

When a school is concerned about a pupil's behaviour, in the first instance it is important that they identify if there are any factors impacting on the pupil's behaviour and should intervene by implementing support early to try and avoid the need to formally exclude (DfE, 2017). By considering the possible causes of the behaviour of CYP, the adults supporting will be able to consider the most appropriate way to respond (Hayden, 1997). It therefore feels imperative that we equip teachers with the necessary skills, tools and knowledge to understand how to better support the needs of vulnerable CYP (DfE, 2019).

As human beings we all have basic needs that need to be met in order to achieve our potential. Maslow's (1943) 'Theory of Motivation' provides a useful framework which allows us to conceptualise and target the needs of individuals to allow them to achieve their potential; physiological/safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualisation (Solomon and Thomas, 2013). Solomon and Thompson (2013) say that we need to provide an environment to support the needs outlined by Maslow (1943) and discuss how adaptations within the school environment can be made to help achieve this. Solomon and Thomas' (2013) areas of intervention include containment, restorative approaches, behaviour management, teaching and learning and multi-agency contributions. By addressing these specific areas of practice, Solomon and Thomas (2013) feel that specific interventions can be introduced to address CYP's neurological and emotional development, to support their resilience and their developing relationships.

There is substantial literature which concentrates on CYP as the 'problem' and shows that the response to behaviour focuses on 'tackling' CYP as opposed to

paying attention to the wider context (Caslin, 2019). However, it is apparent that the emotional and behavioural struggles experienced by CYP in schools cannot be explained as solely within child, and that difficulties are also as a result of a variety of risk factors that come from and are maintained from within the educational environment and its systems (Pereira and Lavoie, 2018). Therefore, it feels as though we need to further recognise the context in which behaviour is occurring, as suggested in Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems model that emphasises the need for us to be aware of the different interrelated contexts in which behaviour occurs (Pritchett et al., 2014). The development of CYP is likely to be influenced by several different environmental factors and therefore the multifaceted nature of behaviour should be recognised.

To reduce school exclusions, it feels appropriate that we should look beyond the child alone and focus on school ethos and altering the environment to meet the needs of CYP to allow for better inclusivity (Hatton, 2013) and school's need to build their capacity in supporting CYP who might be AROSE (DfE, 2019). The use of multiple FEX is often viewed as being counterproductive, as they may cause further disengagement from education, particularly when we consider the variation in their effective use in practice, yet evidence suggests that positive outcomes can be achieved for CYP and their families if and when PEX and FEX are used appropriately (DfE, 2019).

Yet the significance of early intervention and supporting these CYP appears highly beneficial, specifically when we consider the calculated costs and poor outcomes associated with school exclusions (Panayiotopoulos and Kerfoot, 2007). Therefore, investing in early intervention should be a school's primary focus. This includes establishing effective and consistent behavioural policies (Luiselli et al., 2005; Hallam 2007), and school staff receiving training that is founded upon meaningful evidence-based practice (Trotman, 2015), to work to try and include these CYP and ensure they are not excluded from the educational system without receiving necessary support (Panayiotopoulos and Kerfoot, 2007). This is necessary particularly when some teachers have expressed their lack of skill and ability in being able to effectively support children's mental health and well-being, and feel an increased pressure in a climate where cuts are being made to mental health services for CYP in England (Lebeer et al., 2012). And although the evidence for preventative

approaches comes with limited evidence on their impact, the research is suggestive of the need for positive school ethos and culture, support for families and children using high quality external provision, early intervention and targeted support (DfE, 2019b).

Schools have autonomy for school improvements and discipline, yet, due to the complex nature of needs presented by CYP who are AROSE (Paget et al., 2018), should we place sole responsibility of reducing exclusion rates upon schools, or do we need to address these children's needs as part of a wider agenda. However, working in this way can often be viewed as being both expensive and time consuming and therefore exclusion has often been the defaulted option (Robinson, 1998). However, this view is supported by the governments current project lead for behaviour, tsar Tom Bennett, who hopes to support schools in developing new behaviour policies with the expectation to help schools become safer and calmer places. Current policy also recognises the need to develop better working relationships across health, education and social care in order to support early intervention (Paget et al., 2018) and statutory guidance in England suggests that exclusion from school should mark the start of a holistic assessment of need to support the identification of contributing factors despite possible funding implications (Paget et al., 2018).

2.9 The significance of pupil voice

The issue of school exclusion was highlighted in 2012 by the Children's Commissioner for England as part of a national inquiry, and despite there being recent debates about the use of school exclusions, there appears to be a failure to listen to the voices of those who are actually AROSE (Children's Commissioner, 2012). This feels somewhat surprising given that in 2007 the Education and Inspection Act highlighted the role of CYP and their feedback in the running of schools (Hopkins, 2008). Since this time, hearing the voices of CYP has gained some momentum in helping to improve future educational practices (Hopkins, 2008), however more still needs to be done to move towards engaging children's views and recognising their right to be equally valued (UNCRN, 1989). The perceptions of excluded pupils and those who are AROSE are important because they can illuminate the shortcomings of school systems and the wider society (Munn and Lloyd, 2005). It is therefore felt that if we are going to work further to reduce the rate

of school exclusions then we need to listen to the views of these disaffected CYP before solely implementing adult led solutions (Gordon, 2001).

Although there are more emerging studies that gather the views of CYP who have experienced an exclusion from school, there are still few studies that gather the views of CYP who have specifically been identified as being AROSE. Within this section I will consult some of the literature that has used pupil voice to illuminate their school experiences. In the absence of research specifically with children identified 'at risk', I will also discuss studies which consult the voices of children who have identified SEN as they represent a large percentage of the excluded population and also of those who have experienced an exclusion from school to better understand how CYP's views can be both relevant and useful in working to improve policy and practice, and reduce school exclusion levels.

In 1996, Hayden and Ward reported that there was little research that consulted the perspectives of Primary age children which focused on their view/experience of school exclusion. Although this view is now dated, my review of the literature reveals that although there are some emerging studies that represent child voice, it is still relatively limited (Hayden and Ward, 1996). The lack of child voice within the literature may likely be due to the difficulties with ethics and ensuring psychological safety and well-being, that may be present when researching with CYP (Hayden and Ward, 1996). Yet, it is the views of these disaffected CYP that are likely to offer a vital perspective of school exclusion (Munn and Lloyd, 2005), and therefore these difficulties should not stop us from aspiring to work in this way (Hayden and Ward, 1996).

Hayden and Ward (1996) interviewed 22 Primary age children who had been excluded from school during 1993/1994. Although this research is very dated, it is still important in illuminating the experience of exclusion from the viewpoint of Primary age children, given the scarcity of research with such a population (Hayden and Ward, 1996). Results found that most children thought of school exclusion as a memorable and significant event, whether it had been for a short or long period of time. They expressed a variety of different feelings associated with being excluded, including feelings of sadness and anger. Children also raised having access to their peer group as being important (Hayden and Ward, 1996). Overall, Hayden and Ward (1996) found exclusion to be a negative event for these children.

More recently, in 2015, Trotman et al. wanted to better understand the factors associated with school exclusion from pupils and behaviour coordinators, this was significantly relevant following the 2012 national inquiry where the children's commissioner emphasised the need to hear the voices of CYP to further understand the impact of school exclusion. As part of Trotman et al.'s (2015) research they interviewed 49 young people, aged between 14 and 16 years, 23 of which had experienced a fixed term or PEX from school.

Trotman et al. (2012, 2015) found that CYP offered valuable insights on important aspects of their lives, recognising that if we fail to listen to their views, then we will fail to gather significant information. Trotman et al. (2015) noted that each of the young participants partook in the interview process with enthusiasm and appreciated being listened to; *"nobody has ever asked me stuff like this before"*, and provided reflective insights in to their school experiences, which confirms the importance of giving these young people a voice and the opportunity to share their experiences on issues that directly affect them. However, these findings are less useful in contributing to our understanding of how pupils of Primary age can provide reflections on their school experiences given the age of participants in this study.

Sheffield and Morgan (2017) explored the school experiences of a cohort of CYP age 13 to 16 years. These CYP had a label of BESD, a term that is constantly evolving and is more recently referred to as SEMH following the introduction of the Send Code of Practice (2014) (Caslin, 2019). These young people are a population considered to be most at risk of experiencing school exclusion due to their difficulties adhering to school expectations (Caslin, 2019). Sheffield and Morgan (2017) hoped to use the views of these young people to better provide effective provision in schools. Sheffield and Morgan (2017) found that the young people interviewed attributed the difficulties they experienced with behaviour in school as a response to peers, the curriculum and teacher management.

Caslin (2019) also saw the benefits of understanding how young people perceive their school experiences and interviewed young people age 14 to 16 years, who also had a label of BESD. Caslin (2019) found that the responsibility for behaviour was often placed up the individual young person, however the research identified many other factors that could be attributed to young people's behaviours. What both Caslin (2019) and Sheffield and Morgan (2017) found was further confirmation for the

importance of young people having their voices heard to enable a better understanding of their behaviour, and that young people often have an important message to share and can provide powerful insights in to how we can better support them in school. Sheffield and Morgan (2017) and Caslin's (2019) studies have been useful in illuminating the school experiences of a cohort of young people who have a label of BESD and therefore are considered at high risk of school exclusion. However, both studies were conducted with CYP of Secondary age, like that of Trotman et al. (2015). Also, despite these young people having labels of BESD which places them at higher risk of school exclusion, they had not specifically been selected as being AROSE for the research and therefore we should be cautious when trying to generalise these findings to a younger population who are considered to be AROSE.

Hajdukova et al., (2014) conducted a study in New Zealand and interviewed twenty-nine boys, nine to thirteen years, who had SEBD. These children were interviewed about their school experiences in mainstream and residential settings and explored the perceptions of their schooling experiences, in order to positively influence educational practices. This study recognised the value of giving pupils a voice because CYP possess a wealth of knowledge related to educational practices, and in doing so the research found the significance these young people placed up teacher/pupil relationships in school (Hajdukova et al., 2014). It is important to approach these findings with caution, given that data collected comes from the subjective memories of the participants. However, as these findings were achieved from a slightly younger cohort of CYP, they are useful in confirming the value of listening to the voices of CYP within the Primary phase, which studies like that of Trotman et al., (2015), Sheffield and Morgan (2017) and Caslin (2019) were unable to do. However, it is important to consider that these findings are from a New Zealand population and therefore may not be representative of a UK SEBD population.

Maxwell (2006) interviewed 13 junior aged children who were identified as being on the SEN register, and specifically asked these children their views of school using a range of personal construct psychology techniques, drawing on the work of Kelly (1955), Ravenette (19980) and Beaver (1996), and looked at issues that were pertinent for these young people. Although this research did not specifically work with

children who were at risk of or had experienced an exclusion from school, given that two thirds of PEX children have an identified SEN, I feel that this research is highly significant, Maxwell was also a practicing EP when he conducted this research and provides further rationale for its inclusion.

Maxwell (2006) found several themes to emerge from the data; interpersonal relationships, peer groups, friendships, peer conflict and resolution, problem solving in relationships, flexible thoughts and safety, and provides further evidence that children even within the Primary phase can be an extremely valuable resource when trying to understand their school experiences.

All the research considered in this section, demonstrate that CYP can usefully illuminate on issues that concern them directly, although some may still question the trustworthiness of CYP's subjective accounts. However, Pereira and Lavoie (2018) state that without student voice, it is likely that we will fail in addressing the real problems and challenges that CYP face in education. And although some of the research discussed here is not all conducted with children who have been identified as being AROSE specifically and not all studies have been conducted within the UK, the research discussed has indicated that by listening to the voices of CYP, we are able to gather valid and reliable information that can be useful when considering educational practices. Future research should focus on gathering the views from a population of CYP who have specifically been identified as being AROSE, specifically within the Primary phase to address an apparent gap in the literature.

2.10 Primary school exclusions

This section will focus specifically on school exclusions within the Primary phase. I have decided to conduct my research with children of Primary age, and therefore feel that it is necessary to provide more context around Primary school exclusions and their significance.

The concept of excluding children of this age from school is extremely worrying (Hayden, 1996). During the Primary phase children acquire early skills in reading, writing and spelling and therefore exclusion during this time is a concern as any disruption to education can be extremely difficult to overcome later in their education (Hayden, 1996). Hayden (1996) states that although children excluded from Primary school are recognised as being a minority, they are likely an extremely vulnerable group. Historic studies like that of Macrae (1997) (as cited in Maguire et al., 2003)

who worked with disaffected young people, suggested that their difficulties were likely as a result of social, emotional and/or educational problems that were insufficiently responded to during their Primary schooling, and signify the need for more preventative measures (Panayiotopoulos and Kerfoot, 2007).

In 2009, OFSTED released the publication 'The exclusion from school of children aged four to seven', which explored the reasons why children of this age were receiving FEXs and PEXs. Prior to this publication the Department for Children, Schools and Families' (DCSF) data collection revealed that children of this age were being excluded from school in relatively small numbers, however figures as addressed earlier in the review reveal that more children are now being excluded during their Primary education than ever before. With PEXs rising in 2016/17 by 0.03% and FEXs in Primary schools rising by 0.16%, a rise of 55,740 to 64,340 in the same year, and it is important to find out why (DfE, 2018).

Hayden's (1995) study which specifically looked at Primary school exclusions throughout the 1990's highlighted how historically Primary school exclusions have gained minimal attention from researchers when compared to Secondary school exclusions and my search of the literature also suggests this (Parker et al., 2016). Due to the statistics showing that Primary school exclusions only account for a minority of overall school exclusions, this unfortunately means that Primary school exclusions have also often been overlooked through educational planning and provision (Hayden, 1995). This has therefore highlighted for me the need to conduct further research within this area, to specifically look at Primary school exclusions.

2.11 Chapter summary and research questions

This chapter has attempted to present an overview of the literature that is most relevant in illuminating the context of school exclusions, whilst critically evaluating the research base, in relation to the policy and procedures, the current context, risk factors associated with school exclusions and considerations to support a reduction in school exclusion. This summary will draw upon the key issues that have been presented in relation to school exclusions:

The recognition of 'inclusive education' became significant following the dramatic increase of school exclusions within the UK during the 1990's (Shearman, 2003), however, it remains the right of the head teacher to be able to exclude disruptive pupils from their school should it be warranted (Goodman and Burton, 2010).

Behaviour and discipline in school is an issue that has remained significant in the UK. The process of school exclusion is a punitive approach to behaviour that has been embedded within the English education system for a substantial amount of time and is now the accepted and normalised approach to disciplining our pupils (Gazeley et al., 2015).

The process of school exclusion is highly complex and is associated with many different outcomes (Gazeley, 2010). The development of CYP is likely to be influenced by several different environmental factors and therefore the multifaceted nature of behaviour should be recognised. Paget et al., (2018) outlined that exclusion from school is likely to be as the result of a number of different contributing factors across the child, home and school and is less likely to be as the result of one contributing factor alone. The perceptions of vulnerable CYP are recognised as important because they can illuminate the taken-for-granted way the school system operates (Munn and Lloyd, 2005). Although the literature is expanding in this area, there is still limited research that gathers the views of a specific 'at risk' population, yet the literature discussed clearly demonstrates the value that pupil voice can have in illuminating their experiences.

In light of the existing literature, which demonstrates that there is both limited literature that explores the views and experiences of CYP who are specifically AROSE, and in particular within the Primary phase, my research aims to find out about the school experiences of Primary age children who are 'at risk' of PEX. In recognition of the longer-term outcomes for children who have experienced a school exclusion, and the existing high prevalence of school exclusions, the research hopes to be able to illuminate some of the key facilitators and barriers that may contribute to a child being included or excluded from school, and to gain an insight in to the overall school experiences for this cohort of young people.

Identified research questions follow:

- ❖ How do young people age 7 to 11 years, identified as being at risk of PEX by their school, talk about their school experiences?
 - What are the perceived barriers in school for young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX?

- What do young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX think helps/could help them in school?
- What are the important aspects of school for young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX?
- How do young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX feel in school?

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodology used within this research. In doing so, I will firstly consider the concept of qualitative research practice. Although this is a somewhat broad ‘umbrella’ term that encompasses a wide range of components, specifically I will address how we can ensure quality and ethical practice within qualitative research. I will then discuss the philosophical underpinnings and theoretical stance of the research and I will speak in depth about my chosen methodology, recognising its potential benefits and limitations. I will outline my chosen research design, the methods used for data collection and procedures followed during data analysis. This will be followed by a reflection of the ethical practice considered within this research.

3.2 Aim and purpose of the research

The aim of this research is to better understand the school experiences of a population of young people, aged 7 to 11 years, who had been identified by their school as being at risk of PEX. This is important given the expressed need to move towards engaging children’s views and the recognition of their right to be valued (UNCRC, 1989). Specifically, I wanted to identify factors that may contribute to them being AROSE, what factors of school are important to them and what might be able to support them, to better inform intervention practices.

3.3 Defining methodology

Research methodology is the approach that we choose to use in order to solve our research problem and defines how our research will be conducted (Kothari, 2004). The chosen methodology within research helps us to consider the different methods and techniques that we will use during data collection and causes us to thoroughly consider why we are choosing to use such methods and techniques (Kothari, 2004), usually very much influenced by a researcher’s epistemological position (Willig, 2013).

3.4 Qualitative research

Qualitative research concerns itself with words when collecting and analysing data and aims to explore and understand how people apply meaning to social and human problems, in understanding complex settings and interactions (Sofaer, 1999; Bryman,

2012; Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research methods place importance on the views and experiences of the research participants and are particularly concerned with how individuals make sense of and experience their world and allows the researcher to provide an in-depth understanding of the social world in which they exist (Pope and Mays, 1995; Moriarty, 2011; Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014).

Qualitative research study's participants and stimuli within their natural settings, usually in which the participant might be experiencing a problem or an issue. A qualitative researcher will attempt to make sense of or interpret a particular phenomenon in light of how their participant(s) may bring their own meaning to it (Davies, 2007). Data collection methods used within qualitative research presume close contact between the researcher and the research participants (Moriarty, 2011) and likely include methods of data collection such as observation, reviewing and examining documents or interviewing participants (Creswell, 2014), allowing topics and issues to be adequately explored (Moriarty, 2011). Data collected in this way is usually very detailed, rich and intensive, and this is a perceived strength of qualitative approaches (Moriarty, 2011).

Qualitative research expanded in the twentieth century due to some of the perceived difficulties of quantitative research methods in addressing the complexities of social reality (Davies, 2007). Qualitative research methods are seen as useful when we want to uncover insights and may help to offer explanations around causal relationships (Moriarty, 2011), and this is why I feel that a qualitative research approach is most appropriate in addressing my research aims, which are to better understand the school experiences of CYP identified by their school as being at risk of PEX.

3.5 Theoretical underpinnings

The beliefs, theory and philosophy that underpin research are significant components of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013).

3.5.1 Ontology

Simply put, by Crotty (1998), ontology is the study of being and is concerned with the structure and nature of reality. Ontology is concerned with understanding 'what is' and forms the theoretical perspective of research and sits closely with epistemology, 'what it means to know' (Crotty, 1998). Ontology encompasses the way the researcher understands reality to be and different researchers will be concerned with

the nature of different realities (Creswell, 2013; Bryman, 2016). Different ontological positionings include; objectivism, subjectivism and constructionism. My ontological positioning sits within social constructionism.

Social constructionism believes that people construct knowledge between them and seek understanding within the world in which they exist (Burr, 2003; Creswell, 2013). People's versions of their own knowledge are subjective and are constructed as a result of their personal everyday interactions that occur within their social worlds (Burr, 2003; Creswell, 2013). Social constructionism believes that there are multiple realities that exist as a result of people's unique lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). It explicitly denies the idea that our knowledge is constructed as a direct insight of reality, and instead we are responsible for creating our own version of reality, from the social processes that we engage in (Burr, 2003).

My ontological position in my research is social constructionism because I am exploring the subjective school experiences of children who are AROSE, therefore there is no objective reality, and their truth is constructed through their social interactions within their school.

3.5.2 Epistemology

Epistemology asks the question 'how do we know what we know?'. Epistemology is concerned with the construction of knowledge and how knowledge is developed (Creswell, 2013). The data collected through qualitative studies is subjective and based on individual views and experience, and therefore this is how knowledge is created (Creswell, 2013). My epistemological stance in research is interpretative, this means that I am interested in how participants understand their world and the meanings that they make from it (Larkin and Thompson, 2011). Interpretivism accesses knowledge and experience through the interpretation of the participants subjective accounts whilst reflecting on our own experiences and the assumptions we might make (Larkin and Thompson, 2011).

3.6 Alternative methodological approaches

This section will look at the alternative research approaches that have been considered in this study. It is important to consider a range of research approaches to ensure the most suitable method is chosen in meeting the research aims. The alternative methodological approaches considered in this section are: Narrative Inquiry, Thematic Analysis and Grounded Theory.

3.6.1 Narrative Inquiry

Narrative Inquiry is a methodology that I considered before concluding that IPA would be the most desired methodology for this research, and within this section I will discuss Narrative Inquiry as a methodology and its suitability in solving my identified research problem.

Narrative Inquiry has developed as a more acceptable methodology since qualitative research has become more widespread (Clandinin, 2006). Narrative Inquiry is a methodology based on the belief that people can construct and tell stories of their lived experiences throughout the research process (Clandinin, 2006), the researcher then has a responsibility in describing these stories and developing them in to coherent and meaningful narratives (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Researchers engaged in narrative research, believe that narratives are essential when making sense of a phenomena, and human beings need these narratives to help them make sense of what has happened/is happening to them (Willig, 2013).

Narrative Inquiry has been developed from social constructionism (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) and therefore fits with my belief that knowledge is subjective and is socially constructed through our everyday interactions that occur within our social world (Willig, 2013). As with IPA, Narrative Inquiry recognises the active role that the researcher plays within the research process (Willig, 2013). Not only are the questions the researcher chooses to ask, but also the nature of the relationship that is developed between the researcher and participant, likely to influence the nature of the narratives that the participant will share (Willig, 2013). Therefore, the researcher should be explicit about the role that they play and how this may influence research outcomes (Willig, 2013).

Narrative Inquiry would be an appropriate methodology for this study as it reflects the view that experience is subjective and that reality is socially constructed which fits my philosophical positioning and allows for the detailed examination of a participant's experience (Chamberlain, 2011). However, Narrative Inquiry is more concerned with a chain of experiences that can be formed into an ongoing narrative and is interested in how the participants talk about this chain of events (Chamberlain, 2011).

3.6.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a methodology that produces knowledge by both recognising and organising patterns across qualitative data and takes the form of themes that have emerged from the data (Willig, 2013). It is these set of themes that help the researcher to make sense of and address the specific phenomenon being studied (Willig, 2013). There can be great variation in the application of thematic analysis and it can take a range of forms that allow for either a straightforward descriptive overview of the data features, to a more complex look in to the data, allowing the theoretical implications of the analysis to be considered (Smith, 2015).

Thematic analysis is independent of theory and epistemology and therefore the researcher is not committed to a particular epistemological stance when using thematic analysis. However, the researcher is still required to acknowledge their theoretical positioning within the research, it just allows for greater flexibility when doing so (Willig, 2013). Thematic analysis is also said to be suited to a wide range of research questions from experiential to critical questions. However it might be important to consider that it does not fit well with research questions that have a particular focus on language practice and idiography (Smith, 2015).

Some of the limitations associated with thematic analysis come from the idea that its theoretical basis is not explicit and therefore relies on the researcher establishing a clear theoretical basis for their research before conducting the research itself (Willig, 2013). Some feel thematic analysis aligns itself with content analysis whereby the researcher may become pre-occupied with existing concepts and lose sight of any new insights emerging from the data (Willig, 2013). Thematic analysis is also not idiographic in nature whereby it generalises the data to identify patterns which develop into themes (Willig, 2013). This therefore means that you can lose the personalisation of the data. Thematic analysis also does not allow for complex interpretations of the data (Willig, 2013).

3.6.3 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss, who intended to develop a methodology which allowed for the study of data to theory, to allow new theories to develop (Willig, 2013). These theories would therefore be grounded within the data from which they emerged (Willig, 2013). Grounded theory is an emergent method which builds an inductive understanding of the world as events unfold (Smith, 2015).

The researcher uses methodological tools to answer the emergent theoretical and empirical questions which occur during the research process itself (Smith, 2015). This means research questions in grounded theory research should remain open ended (Smith, 2015), thereby it is intended that the researcher begins by exploring a general question about a specific phenomenon of interest (Smith, 2015).

Grounded theory uses a realist orientation and aims to produce knowledge of processes found in the data and takes a positivist approach to knowledge production (Willig, 2013). A limitation of grounded theory are concerns with its epistemology, in that it grounds itself with a positivist epistemology and does not acknowledge reflexivity. Also, it is concerned with the uncovering of social processes and therefore its suitability for qualitative research has often been questioned, particularly as its mapping of experiences can be considered descriptive as opposed to explorative in nature (Willig, 2015).

In the following section I will talk in more depth about IPA, and my rationale for using it as a methodology, whilst also recognising its possible limitations.

3.7 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

3.7.1 Principles of IPA

IPA is a qualitative research approach which is primarily concerned with the examination of how people are making sense of their unique lived experiences (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). The aim of IPA is to explore in detail how research participants are making sense of their world and their positioning within it (Willig and Stainton-Rogers, 2008). The researcher is interested in the things the participant has experienced and this is done by investigating in detail the individual accounts of the participant's subjective understandings, perceptions and views of their experiences (Brocki and Wearden, 2006).

IPA studies draw upon the principles of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). Phenomenology is the detailed and in-depth study of conscious experience and IPA's origins of phenomenology, mean that IPA is concerned with trying to understand what life might be like from the perspective of their participants (Smith and Osborn, 2007). Phenomenological intentions are to try and describe how the world is both formed and experienced by others, through conscious acts (Willig and Stainton-Rogers, 2008). Studies grounded

in phenomenology focus on how people perceive specific events, as opposed to merely providing a description of them (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014).

Phenomenology, as developed by Edmund Husserl, is concerned with how things appear to individuals as a result of their experience and aims to identify the different components within an experience, that make them unique to that person (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). In order for the researcher to be able to make sense of the world of the research participant, the researcher has their own conceptions that allow them to make sense of what the research participant is saying through a process of interpretative activity (Smith and Osborn, 2007). Without phenomenology there would be nothing for the researcher to interpret. IPA however draws on several different phenomenological positions like hermeneutic phenomenology, and therefore, is seen to accentuate the interpretive features of its analysis (Willig and Stainton-Rogers, 2008). There are many variations in the way in which people experience their world, and IPA is particularly interested in this variability that exists across people and is interested, therefore, in the detailed analysis across a small population (Willig and Stainton-Rogers, 2008).

There is a two-stage interpretative process involved within IPA studies, also referred to as a double hermeneutic. Hermeneutics is the study of interpretation. In IPA studies, the participant trying to make sense of their world, but also the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their world, using empathetic and questioning hermeneutics (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). This double hermeneutic is viewed as necessary in being able to make sense of a participant's experiences, as opposed to being eliminated and viewed as a 'bias' within the research, and instead researchers are encouraged to reflect on these assumptions that they might bring to the research as a result of their own experiences, interests and values, and recognise that it is not possible to remain fully removed from this research process (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). IPA therefore, acknowledges and celebrates the active role that the researcher plays within a dynamic research process that allows the researcher to get closer to the participant's inside world (Smith and Osborn, 2007; Lander and Sheldrake, 2010).

Idiography is another important principle of IPA. Idiography is concerned with the particular and what this implies is that IPA is committed to exploring in detail and analysing in depth, the specific, unique experiences of each individual participant

(Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). This starkly contrasts with a lot of Psychology which aligns itself with being 'nomothetic' which instead makes claims at a wider population, group level, and does not focus specifically on the unique individual (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Therefore, IPA studies need to have commitment in engaging in thorough and systematic analysis within each individual case (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009), and it is not until during later stages of analysis that these individual transcripts become integrated (Willig, 2013).

3.7.2 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a process that helps us to ensure rigour within our research (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Reflexivity enables us to be reflective of our own values, beliefs and interests and how these may have influenced our research in some way (Willig, 2013). The process of reflexivity involves the researcher being able to make critical reflections throughout the research, from the research interests we have, how we construct research questions, how we analyse and interpret information and how we choose to present our research findings. A researcher who is reflexive is one who is able to take a critical stance and reflect on their role as the researcher and the potential risks of their influences at all stages throughout the research (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004).

Within IPA, it is a necessity that the researcher acquires a reflexive attitude, given the role that the researcher plays within the dynamic research process of IPA studies (Willig, 2013). IPA aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants world, but also it acknowledges that a true understanding of the participant's accounts can only be possible if the researcher both fully engages and interprets the account of the participant (Willig, 2013). IPA explicitly acknowledges and embraces the role that the researcher has within the research and the involvement they have within the research process (Lander and Sheldrake, 2010). This reflexivity helps in making the research accounts more transparent (Lander and Sheldrake, 2010), and is important because it allows the researcher to recognise how they may have implications on the research findings (Willig, 2013). A reflective account can be found in Chapter 6, which also considers my role as a researcher.

3.7.3 Rationale for using IPA

IPA is an appropriate methodology for my research due to its compatibility with an interpretative epistemology (Smiths, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). IPA allows the

researcher to focus on the individual experience of the participant and is therefore idiographic in nature. IPA views experience to be subjective and socially constructed, and is specifically interested in an individual's personal perception of a particular topic under investigation and also allows for the examination of shared experiences across a population of participants to make comparisons of a homogenous population (Smith, Jarman and Osborn, 1999). Whilst also allowing the researcher to look at shared experiences IPA permits the detailed examination of data, allowing the researcher to gather rich information concerning the participants experience of a phenomenon (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). And perhaps it will allow for the detailed exploration of the school experiences of a population of CYP at risk of PEX and a better understanding of how they position themselves in their unique world.

3.7.4 Limitations of IPA as a research approach

Although IPA has many positive aspects, such as its ability to apply meaning to experience, its in-depth study of individual accounts, and its clear and distinct guidelines by which to conduct data analysis, there are some limitations of IPA. Willig (2013) identified the conceptual and practical limitations of IPA as being; the role of language, suitability of accounts and explanation versus description. Specifically, Willig (2013) expresses that IPA relies on the validity of language in accurately representing what the participant has experienced. Willig (2013) questions as to whether language truly describes a person's reality, or if language constructs reality, and therefore takes on a different role within the research. Willig (2013) also addresses the suitability of participant accounts within IPA, in particular Willig (2013) questions the reliability of participants in being able to give rich, in-depth descriptions of their experiences, and how suitable are these accounts as data for a phenomenological study. Some also feel that the fact that IPA is based on description is itself a limitation, and that it can be felt that to ignore the origins and causes of a phenomenon can make it difficult for us to have a true understanding of an experience (Willig, 2013).

There are also recognisable limitations to using IPA with children and young participants. Smith (2004) highlights the often-expressed critique that qualitative methods in general require reflexive articulate qualities from its participants, and IPA is no different. Therefore, in particular IPA may not be considered appropriate when researching with children, and particularly those from vulnerable groups, due to their

inability to articulate and express their views at a level needed for such interpretation required for IPA studies. However, Smith (2004) feels this should not deter us from using IPA when working with children and/or vulnerable groups. Smith (2004) thinks the richness of accounts produced are more likely to be influenced by the importance of the experience to that person. Also, Smith (2004) asks us to consider if the gains from speaking to this particular participant population outweigh costs of their speech and language levels. There are adaptations that can be made when using IPA with children, for example the researcher may need to take a more guiding role in the interview, modify existing protocols and use interventionist tools to support the interview (Smith, 2004). Also, it is advised that preliminary sessions will also be useful when interviewing children to support their readiness to engage in interviews regarding their experiences (Smith, 2004).

It is important as a researcher to have a critical understanding of a methodological approach and this means taking consideration of its limitations. However, these limitations were subsequently carefully considered during my data collection and the necessary adaptations were made to enable the use of IPA as the methodological approach for this study.

3.8 Ensuring quality of research

When conducting research, it is important that we evaluate the quality of such research. Reliability and validity in research are the criteria by which we usually assess the quality of research, in particular that of quantitative research (Bryman, 2012). However, within the literature on qualitative research, there has been much debate around how to judge the quality of qualitative research methods and the appropriateness of judging them by the same criteria by which quantitative methods are deemed to be both reliable and valid (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, many differing perspectives exist around the validity of qualitative research in terms of how it should be defined, described and measured (Creswell, 2013).

Lincoln and Guba (1985; 1994) introduced specific ways by which we could assess the quality of qualitative data that are both discrete and different from reliability and validity (as cited in Bryman, 2012). These criteria are; trustworthiness and authenticity (Bryman, 2012). More specifically trustworthiness is made up of four distinct aspects; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman, 2012), which they feel fit well with naturalistic research (Creswell, 2013). However,

Guba and Lincoln (1994) are not the only ones to deviate from the simplistic notion of reliability and validity within qualitative research methods, Yardley (2000) too proposed separate criteria by which to evaluate qualitative research, these are; sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence and, impact and importance (as cited in Bryman, 2012). I reflected on both the traditional concepts of reliability and validity alongside both Guba and Lincoln (1985;1994) and Yardley (2000), who I feel together have addressed a broad and encompassing set of criteria by which we can establish quality in research. Below I will address some of the criteria that I considered more specifically within my research to ensure its quality.

3.8.1 Trustworthiness

In ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research the researcher needs to be open and honest throughout the research process and in the presentation of the participant's accounts. Trustworthiness of qualitative research can sometimes be questioned because of the fact the reliability and validity cannot be so easily applied within qualitative research methods as they can when using quantitative research methods (Shenton, 2004). However, there are ways in which we can ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research and such aspects were considered throughout my research, such as; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1994) (Bryman, 2012). In doing this it is important that as researchers we are confident that we are providing an accurate interpretation of the data, we provide rich descriptions of the context and phenomenon being explored and we are transparent in our reporting of our methods of data collection and data analysis (Shenton, 2004).

3.8.2 Credibility and authenticity

Credibility is achieved in qualitative research when the researcher has confidence in their interpretations of the data (Carboni, 1995, as cited in Whitemore et al., 2001). Achieving credibility and authenticity is often seen as the most important component when trying to achieve trustworthiness of qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). It is therefore important that the researcher; adopts well established research methods that have been successfully established in the field, has a thorough understanding of the field of their research, uses random sampling, encourages honesty and truth from participants who have the opportunity to withdraw from the study and appropriate questioning to establish truth (Shenton, 2004). These are just some of the elements

that can support the authenticity and credibility of a qualitative research project which were adhered to in the current study.

3.8.3 Rigour

Rigour of research can be achieved through the researcher being self-conscious throughout the research design. It is important that the process of data analysis is explicit so that another researcher has a clear and transparent understanding of the steps followed during data analysis (Mays and Pope, 1995). In this research I have followed Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) model of data analysis to ensure rigour within my research. I have also provided an account of reflexivity in section 3.7.2 which helps establish rigour within research.

3.9 Research participants

The aim of the research is to better understand the school experiences of a population of young people, age 7 to 11 years, who had been identified by their school as being at risk of PEX. Specifically, I wanted to identify factors that may contribute to them being AROSE, what factors of school are important to them and what might be able to support them, to better inform intervention practices.

My decision to include children over 7 years of age within the Primary phase was mostly based on professional judgement and personal experience that children over 7 years of age would be more able to engage in the interactive nature of the research process at the level expected.

3.9.1 Participation criteria

When recruiting participants to take part in the research it was important that they were identified by their school as being at risk of PEX. It was likely that each school would have contrasting thresholds as to what constituted a young person being at risk of PEX and therefore I devised the following criteria for schools to use when considering if a student was at risk of PEX:

Pupils chosen are at risk of PEX because they meet ONE or more of the following criteria;

- *Display consistent disruptive behaviour*
- *Are consistently in receipt of school behavioural sanctions*
- *Have experienced FEXs*
- *Have already experienced a PEX within the same academic year*

The following participation criteria was also specified during participant recruitment;

- *Please also consider essential participation criteria;*
- *Pupils must be between 7 and 11 years of age.*
- *Parents must be aware that this young person is at risk of PEX.*

3.9.2 Participant recruitment and sampling

Sampling within IPA studies is predominantly purposive, as opposed to opportune or convenience sampling (Brocki and Wearden, 2006). Purposive sampling is where research participants are selected against a specified set of criteria and represent a closely defined group who will be significant in helping answer identified research questions (Willig, 2013). This provides the researcher with a homogenous sample, whereby the participants all share a commonality, be it a condition, an event or a situation (Willig, 2013). The commonality within this research is that all participants are currently at risk of PEX and should be identified using the specified criteria as outlined in section 3.9.1.

Due to the idiographic nature of IPA studies, and the time that needs to be given to the analysis of individual transcripts, in order to commit to the detailed understanding of its sample, sample sizes within IPA studies are generally small in their quantity (Brocki and Wearden, 2006). Smith, Larkin and Flowers (2009) suggest that there is no correct answer as to the exact sample size of IPA studies, as they feel that this depends on the commitment of the researcher to their level of data analysis.

However, for doctoral studies, Smith, Larkin and Flowers (2009) suggest that between four and ten interviews, as opposed to participants, is preferred. This number would allow for the development of potential similarity and disparity across the sample but would still allow for the researcher to become comfortably familiar with the data (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009). Taking into consideration suggestions made by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) I decided that I would use a participant sample of between 6 and 10 CYP, age 7 to 11 years.

When trying to recruit my research population I initially presented my research aims to EPs working within my EPS placement provider and asked them to discuss my participant criteria with their link schools. The EPs also discussed the research aims and participation criteria during annual planning meetings. Secondly, I contacted the SEMH Team, a team that support schools in responding to CYP with challenging

behaviour and discussed my research aims and participant criteria during their team meeting.

Harcourt and Sargeant (2011) recognises the importance of making a commitment to researching with CYP to help achieve meaningful outcomes on issues that might be directly affecting them. However, there are difficulties which can arise when wanting to conduct research with CYP. Some of these difficulties arise from our concern with the protection and safeguarding of this age group, which can often result in them not being involved in research (Farrell, 2004; 2005, as cited in Dockett and Perry, 2007). Another difficulty is that which is associated with 'gatekeepers' and I will discuss in the next section how I overcame this potential difficulty in my research.

3.9.3 Research participants

A total of three schools identified six pupils to take part in the study. Participants were required to take part in an initial meeting lasting 10 minutes and an interview lasting between 40 and 50 minutes. All participants recruited were between 7 and 11 years, were all males and were recruited across three separate Primary schools within one UK LA. Participant profiles can be found in Appendix 8.

The demographics of the six participants can be found in the table below.

Name	Age	Gender	Diagnosis	EHCP
Ben	8 years	Male	ADHD	Assessment
Finn	7 years	Male	ADHD/ASD?	No
Nathan	9 years	Male	ASC/Dyslexia	Assessment
Callum	9 years	Male	No	No
Sam	8 years	Male	No	No
Liam	8 years	Male	ADHD?	No

Table 2: Participant demographics

Children who participated in the interviews were not required to know that they had been identified as being at risk of permanent exclusion by their school. This therefore required the interview to focus on their school experience alone, and not the process or nature of school exclusion. An example of questions asked of participants included:

- Can you tell me about your school?
- Can you describe your school to me?
- Can you tell me what you do in school?
- What happens at school?

Specific questions asked of the children interviewed are outlined in the interview schedule in Appendix 9.

As participants were not necessarily aware that they were at risk of permanent school exclusion this also required a sense of consciousness from myself as the researcher to protect this information from participants.

3.9.4 Gatekeepers

'Gatekeeper' is a term used to describe adults who can control a researcher's access to possible research participants (McFadyen and Rankin, 2017). Gatekeeping is common across the field of educational, social and health research and can affect whether research is likely to be successful or not. Gatekeeping usually occurs within research that uses a population that is posed to be at higher ethical risk, for example CYP (McFayden and Rankin, 2017). During participant recruitment I had two sets of gatekeepers that I needed to consult with and obtain consent from in order to access participants. These were school staff and parents. I found this aspect of recruitment quite difficult as school staff often felt that they did not have the time to allow their pupils to take part in the study, and often appeared reluctant to share with other agencies, such as EPs that they had pupils who were AROSE. This only highlighted to me further the importance of working with this group of CYP, who may normally be difficult to access. I found that generally parents were happy for their child to take part in the study and only one parent required more detail and reassurance of the research process.

To overcome any barriers associated with gatekeeping, in particular with school professionals, I worked to ensure that the information provided about the research process and what was required of everyone involved (school, SENCO, pupil) was clear and concise. McFayden and Rankin (2016) believe that this allows trust between researcher and gatekeeper to develop and ensures integrity of the research. It is also important to demonstrate sensitivity to the position of the gatekeeper and ensure that empathy and sincerity is demonstrated during the recruitment process (McFayden and Rankin, 2016). I felt that this was vital in supporting school in their decision to consent to their pupils to take part in the research.

3.10 Research design

3.10.1 The interview process

Within IPA research studies, the researcher, as previously discussed is concerned with gaining a detailed insight into how research participants perceive and make sense of their experiences and their world. IPA studies therefore require both a flexible approach to data collection, and one that allows for in-depth personal accounts to be heard (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Although there are many approaches to data collection that might be considered suitable, Smith and Osborn (2003) state that semi-structured interviews are viewed as the exemplary method used within IPA studies. I therefore chose to use semi-structured interviews within my research. A semi-structured interview not only allows for the researcher and research participant to engage in intimate dialogue, but also allows the researcher the flexibility to modify questions and probe with further questioning throughout the interview as necessary (Smith and Osborn, 2003).

Despite semi-structured interviews being my chosen method of data collection because of the many advantages they pose, it is also important to recognise some of the criticisms and limitations of using semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection. Kvale (2006) highlights some significant criticisms of interviews as a method of data collection. Particularly, Kvale (2006) talks about the manipulative potential of interviews conducted between a researcher and their research participant. Interviews can so often be preconceived as a mutual dialogue; however, the interview is taking place for the purpose of the researcher. This means that the researcher comes to the interview with a predetermined research agenda, specified by the interview topic and interview questions (Kvale, 2006), involving a form of subjectivism not present in other methods (Fadyl and Nicholls, 2013). This therefore unintentionally causes a hierarchical relationship to occur within the interview process from the outset with a one-way dialogue caused by the one-directional questioning initiated by the interviewer (Kvale, 2006). The interview is undeniably an instrument used by the researcher to gain valuable information from the interviewee and the interviewer is solely responsible for both the interpretation of the data collected and its reporting (Kvale, 2006). This only further contributes to the imbalance of power at play using interviews. These criticisms however should not mean that we are deterred from using interviews as a method of data collection, because despite the criticisms they still pose many potential benefits as earlier

discussed. What this does mean is that as a researcher using interviews as a chosen method of data collection, our ethical considerations become ever more important during data collection and my ethical considerations are discussed further later in this chapter.

Before conducting a semi-structured interview, the researcher is required to design a set of questions, which will make up the researcher's interview schedule. This interview schedule is used to guide the researcher through the interview process; however, the researcher is not to be dictated by this guide (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Within a semi-structured interview, the researcher and research participant have the opportunity to build rapport, the researcher is able to explore predetermined areas of interest, but with the flexibility to explore aspects of the psychological and social world of the research participant (Smith and Osborn, 2003).

Prior to interviews with participants I had an introductory meeting with each participant. This was a short meeting that lasted between 10 and 15 minutes. This meeting gave me the opportunity to discuss the information sheet and the consent form in detail with each participant to help ensure informed consent. It also allowed for rapport to be built between myself and the participants ahead of the interview to allow them to feel more relaxed during the interview. This meeting also allowed participants the opportunity to ask any questions they might have about the research or the research process. All meetings and interviews took place in a quiet room within the participant's home school.

3.10.2 Interview schedule

Although a semi-structured interview allows for some flexibility and for a co-construction of the interview to happen between the researcher and the research participant, it is still important to have a pre-planned interview schedule (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Interview schedules designed for IPA studies should be kept short and should begin with broad and general questions, allowing participants to take a lead on which direction the conversation takes, and is not directed by the researcher, where verbal input from the researcher can be kept minimal, meaning that the researcher does not influence participants answers (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). This allows for a comfortable interaction between the researcher and the participant to take place (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

Details of the interview schedule can be found in Appendix 9.

Due to the age range of my participants I decided to use additional tools to support my interview and help the participants feel more comfortable. The additional tools I chose to use were informed by my research questions and required me to think about the topic areas I wanted to cover and the most appropriate sequence that this should happen in (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). In particular I decided to use several techniques from Personal Construct Psychology as proposed by Kelly (1955), Ravanette (1980) and Beaver (2011) as tools to support the conversation. These creative activities can be useful tools that help children to express themselves and help them to talk about their experiences (Clark, 2011). Specifically, I used 'Blob pictures' (Wilson, 2009), 'kinetic school drawings' and 'the ideal school'. These were influenced by my research questions. A summary of each of these techniques can be found in Appendix 10.

Such methods aim to be not only inclusive in their nature, but also allow for rapport, trust and confidence to develop between researcher and participant (Barker and Weller, 2003). Researchers are more commonly using creative activities in their interviews with children to make the process more fun and interesting and also because they help facilitate the child's thinking and what they might be trying to communicate (Fargas-Maler, McSherry, Larkin and Robinson, 2010). I felt that this was particularly important knowing that I would be working with a population of children who could not only be difficult to engage, but as also highlighted during my literature search, could likely have some additional learning needs.

3.11 Data analysis

The essence of IPA lies within its analytical attention to the transcripts that have developed through the attempts of participants to make sense of their experiences (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009). The aim of IPA studies is to gain an understanding of the social world of the participant and to apply meaning to the experiences that they have talked about within their interviews (Smith and Osborn, 2003). When analysing my data, I used a six-step framework as outlined by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) to allow for transparency and rigour during data analysis.

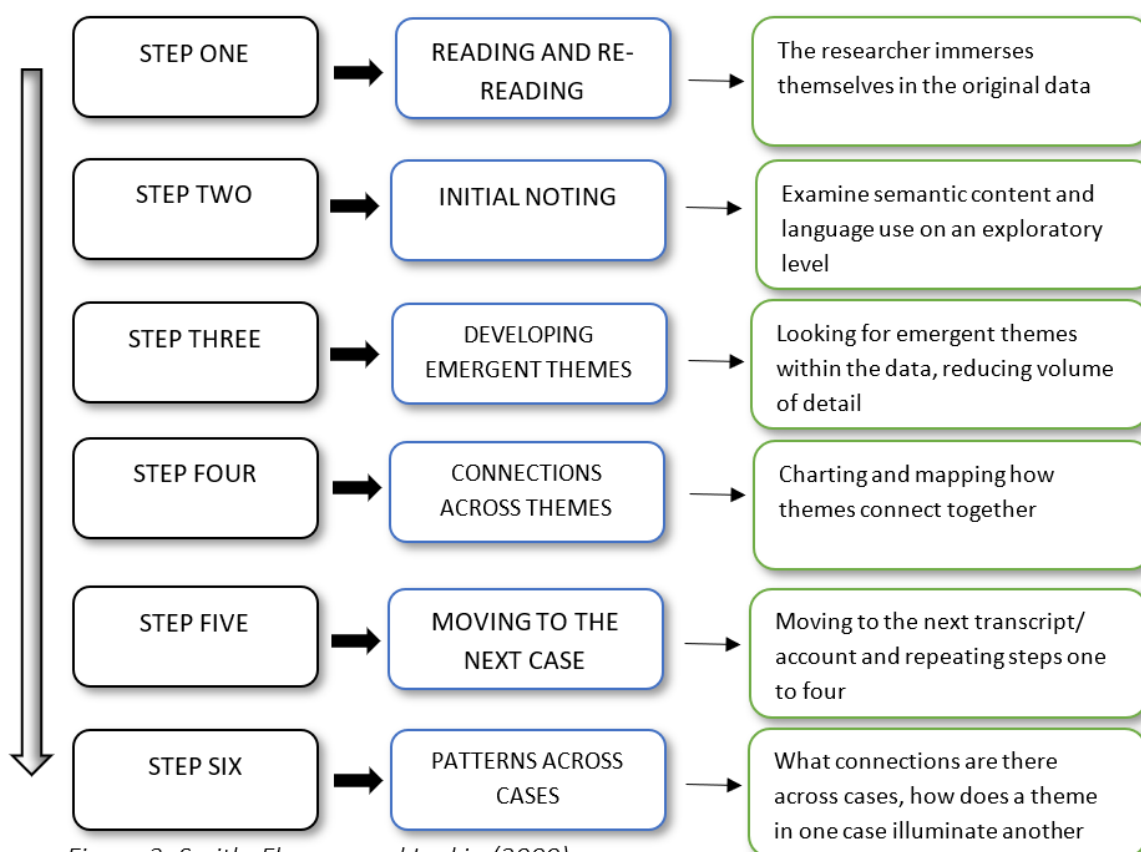


Figure 3: Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009)

A more detailed account of the data analysis process I used can be found in Appendix 11.

3.12 Ethical considerations

An important aspect of being a researcher is being ethically mindful throughout the research process. Ethical practice is a process that should be strictly monitored throughout data collection and data analysis (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). As within any research, qualitative research requires the researcher to look after their research participants, in particular their physical, psychological and emotional well-being and ensure they are not at risk of any harm as a consequence of being a research participant (Willig, 2013). When researchers are designing and planning a qualitative research study it is important that they consider all of the ethical issues that may arise at any stage throughout the research process and they must make sure that plans are in place on how to address these ethical issues should they occur (Creswell, 2013).

In ensuring ethical practice I consulted the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018), which states that professional conduct should be based on four principles; respect, competence, responsibility and integrity, and by which I used to ensure ethical

practice within my role as researcher. I also consulted The Code of Human Research Ethics by the BPS (2014), which outlines a set of key principles that are applicable when conducting research with human participants. These principles have been consulted and adhered to throughout this research; respect for the autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals and communities; scientific integrity; social responsibility; and maximising benefit and minimising harm. Ethical approval was also awarded for this research in March 2018 by the Norah Fry School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee at The University of Bristol.

Below Table 2 provides a summary of the specific ethical issues addressed throughout data collection and data analysis. Detailed ethical considerations can be found in Appendix 12.

Confidentiality	Within qualitative research we need to be particularly sensitive to issues of confidentiality and researchers should ensure the complete confidentiality of information obtained from participants during data collection (Willig, 2013).
Anonymity	It is important that researchers take the necessary precautions to try and ensure that information shared will not allow participants to become identifiable (Willig, 2013).
Risk of harm	An important part of any research project is the avoidance of harm to its research participants (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Researchers need to safeguard their participants and work to maintain positive psychological well-being and ensure they maintain their dignity at all times (Willig, 2013).
Informed consent	The BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018) states that any person taking part in research should consent freely to their involvement based on the receipt of adequate information of their involvement. Informed consent must be gained from participants before they take part in any data collection. This involves ensuring that participants have a thorough understanding of what they should expect by taking part in data collection interviews (Willig, 2013).

Table 3: Ethical considerations summary

3.13 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have considered the methodology used within this research. Firstly, I closely discussed qualitative research methodology and considered how we can ensure quality within qualitative research. I then introduced my theoretical stance as a researcher as being social constructionist and interpretative. I then explained the rationale for my chosen methodology, IPA and went on to explain the principles of IPA in detail, whilst considering some of its possible limitations as a research methodology. I have also clarified my rationale for conducting my research using semi-structured interviews and have outlined my interview schedule. This chapter has allowed me to explain criteria and procedures for participant sampling and recruitment and I went on to introduce my research population, before giving an overview of my data analysis. This chapter finished with a consideration of ethical practice in research, specifically; confidentiality, anonymity, risk of harm and informed consent, and I have considered how I addressed these potential ethical issues within the research process.

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

Within this chapter I will share my research findings following analysis of the data, using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as outlined in Chapter three. A total of four master themes emerged across the data set and these are illustrated in the thematic map presented below (*figure 4*).

The findings in this section will be presented in relation to each of the four master themes identified. I will consider each of the identified themes across the participant group as a whole, to allow for a holistic understanding of each of the themes and a deeper consideration as to how they relate to their experiences of school.

Within each master theme data will also be discussed under the super-ordinate themes, these are themes that sit under each master theme. Throughout the findings I will address how each super-ordinate theme relates to the young people's school experiences. To provide further clarity of the data, some super-ordinate themes will be further broken down into subthemes.

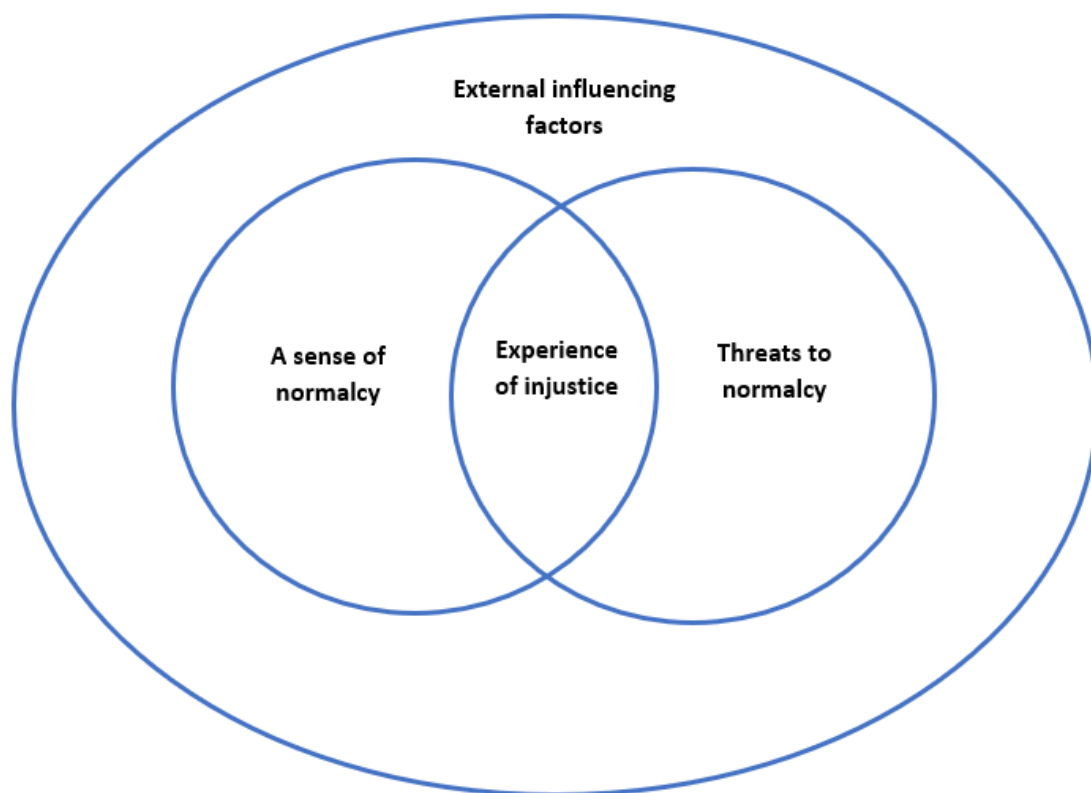


Figure 4: Thematic map of master themes

The four master themes that emerged across the data were; a sense of normalcy, threats to normalcy, experience of injustice and external influencing factors. Each of these themes offer an understanding as to how these young people who have been identified as being 'at risk' of school exclusion are experiencing school. They also offer some understanding of how these experiences of school might subsequently influence their exclusion from school.

The first theme, a sense of normalcy, implies these young people experience or strive to experience aspects of school similarly to those experiences of their peers who have not been identified as being at risk of permanent school exclusion. They are wanting and value 'normal' school experiences and opportunities. For example, they place value upon social belonging, their learning opportunities, school ethos and the need to feel safe in school and demonstrate a level of self-awareness of their strengths and difficulties like their peers.

However, these young people also show that they experience difficulties in school which can threaten their sense of normalcy. These have been grouped into the master theme 'threats to normalcy'. These threats to normalcy include factors such as; social difficulties, difficulties with learning, their behaviours and emotions. Both themes have a direct impact upon each other because these young people want to experience normalcy, but this does not always happen because of the threats to normalcy (difficulties) they experience.

These young people also implied they can experience injustice in school. This is likely due to them wanting to experience school as 'normal'. However, when their experiences are not normal or they perceive them to not be 'normal', they can experience injustice. This experience of injustice is also influenced by difficulties (their threats to normalcy), which can act as barriers to their normal school experiences. This further influences their experiences of injustice, as a result of them feeling they have been treated unfairly or have been victimised.

The final theme of external influencing factors demonstrates how experiences such as family worries and troubled sleep may further influence how these young people are experiencing school. How these young people are experiencing school appears influential upon their being at risk of school exclusion which will be demonstrated as the findings are discussed.

In figure 5 presented below, I represent each of the master themes and their related super-ordinate themes. Throughout the remainder of the chapter I will consider each of these themes in relation to how the young people identified as being ‘at risk’ of PEX talked about their school experiences and how they may relate to them being at risk of PEX.

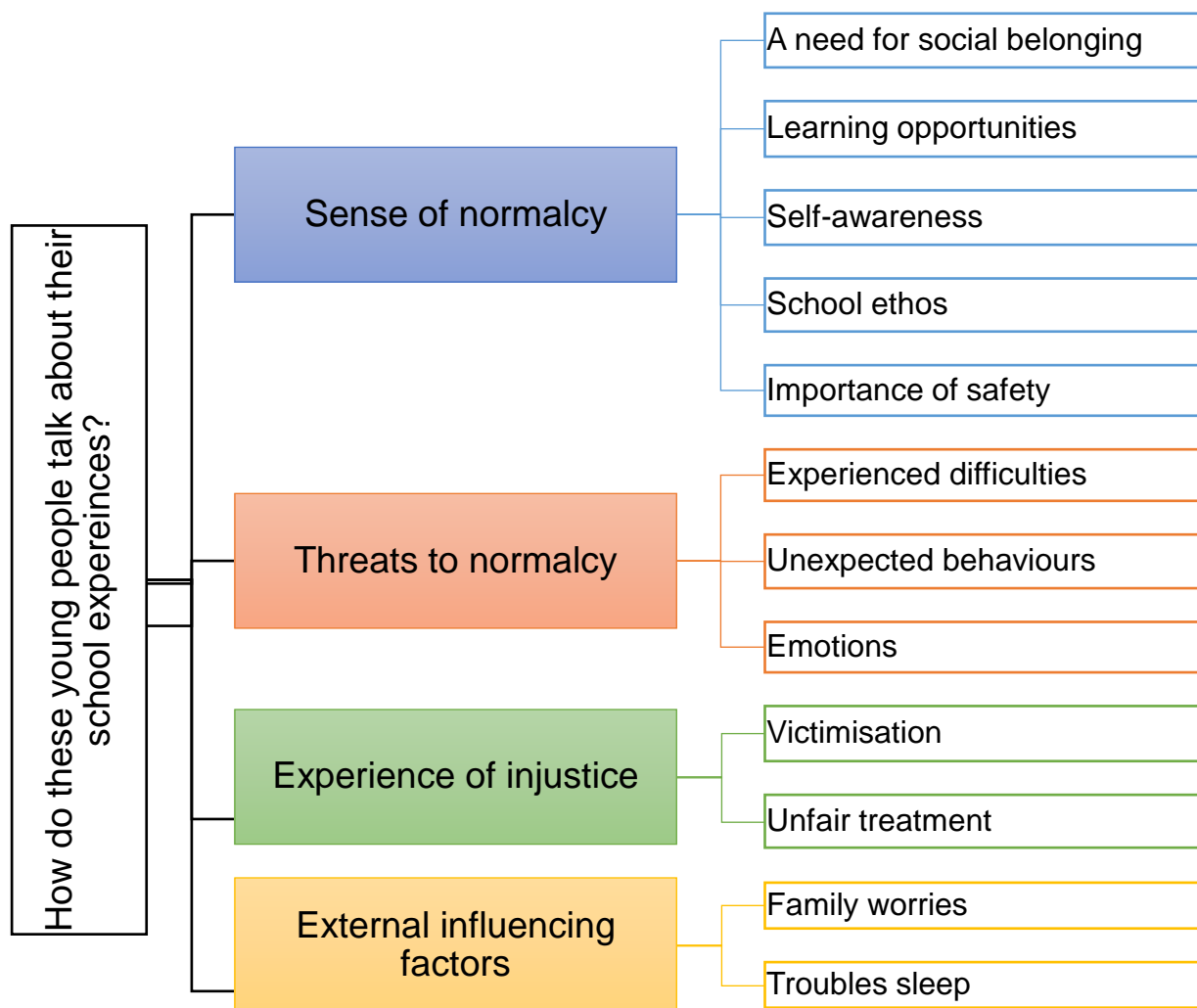


Figure 5: Overview of themes

To aid the readers understanding of the identified themes across the interviewed population, I have created a visual representation, below in table 4, which outlines each of the themes and their correspondence to each of the six participants.

Super-ordinate Theme	Ben	Finn	Nathan	Callum	Sam	Liam	
A need for social belonging	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Peer relationships	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher relationship	X	X			X		X
Personality attributes	X		X	X	X	X	X
Being supported	X	X	X	X		X	X
Social opportunities	X		X	X		X	X
Self-awareness	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Strengths	X		X		X		X
Difficulties		X	X	X		X	X
School ethos	X		X	X	X		X
Importance of safety		X	X	X			X
Learning opportunities	X	X	X	X	X		X
Positive learning behaviours	X		X				
Importance of learning			X	X	X		X
Learning as enjoyable		X	X	X	X		X
Experienced difficulties	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Social difficulties	X	X		X	X	X	X
Difficulties with learning		X	X	X	X		X
Unexpected behaviours			X		X	X	X
Emotions		X	X	X			X
Experience of injustice	X		X	X	X	X	X
Victimisation			X	X			
Unfair treatment	X		X		X	X	X
External influencing factors			X		X	X	
Troubled sleep			X		X		
Family worries					X	X	

Table 4: Themes across participant population

4.2 Theme 1: Sense of normalcy

A master theme to emerge from the data was the theme of a 'sense of normalcy'.

This theme relates to how the young people interviewed spoke about their school experience in relation to the normal experiences they have and may strive for in school. There were some apparent differences however across the participant group as to their experience of normalcy in school. Some experiencing more normalcy than others and some still striving for these normal experiences. A 'sense of normalcy' that emerged from the data has come from factors such as a need for social belonging, self-awareness, learning opportunities, school ethos and the importance of safety. These have been grouped under the theme a 'sense of normalcy' as they are aspects related to school experiences that may be viewed as 'normal' and not so different to how we would expect the majority of young people to talk about their school experiences. The experiences the young people interviewed talked about may

therefore not be unique to a population of young people identified as being 'at risk' of PEX, and may be factors that can help to reduce their risk of being excluded from school.

4.2.1 A need for social belonging

Throughout their interviews, all the young people implied the importance of experiencing social belonging in school. The importance of social belonging was induced from their conversations about and experiences of their relationships with peers and teachers in school, the personality attributes of their peers and teachers, the extent to which they experience support in school and their social opportunities. Each of these elements talked about during the young people's interviews were mentioned positively and contributed to a positive school experience. A positive sense of social belonging may therefore support these young people to experience school positively and may help to reduce their risk of exclusion from school.

All the young people talked about their experience of peer relationships and friendships in school. Ben, Finn and Sam spoke about their relationships with teachers in school and the importance of these relationships upon their school experience. Ben, Nathan, Callum and Sam talked about positive qualities such as being nice and friendly when talking about their friends and all the young people interviewed placed value on the personality and behavioural attributes of the adults in school which seemed influential on their experience of school.

To ensure a deeper understanding of the aspects these young people spoke about in relation to their experience of social belonging in school this section will now be organised under the five following sub-themes; peer relationships, teacher relationships, personality attributes, support and social opportunities.

Peer relationships

Firstly, some of the young people spoke about their school experience in relation to their peer relationships. Ben and Nathan spoke about the quantity of friends they have in school, suggesting that having a large number of friends is important to them. The majority of the young people talked positively about their friendships and implied these have a positive impact upon their schooling experience. Sam also talked about

the Blob from the Blob picture that he would like to be in school as having lots of friends, and having lots of friends would make him feel happy.

Ben: *'Yeh I have like I have hundreds'.*

Nathan: *'Um my friends are all of are...all of Adam, Lewis, Ryan, Kyle, Matt, Bill, Liam, Craig'*

Sam: *'He has loads of friends' and 'he's feeling happy...he got loads of friends'.*

Liam: *'I got a ton of friends'.*

Nathan and Ben also talked about experiencing friendships positively in school, saying they felt they had good friends and that their friends made school a positive experience, causing them to feel happy.

Nathan: *'I have good friends in this school'.*

Nathan: *'Sometimes they make me laugh' and 'Um they're kind and friendly'.*

Ben: *'Uhhh school really and my friends make me feel happy because I've got thousands of friends that make me feel happy.'*

Ben also went on to share that one of the best things about school is, *'when you have nice friends.'*

When Nathan was asked what he does to have fun in school and what makes him feel happy, he responded *'playing with my friends'.* *'I like my friends in the school'.*

Contrasting to this, Callum did not spend a lot of time during the interview talking about his peers and did not talk explicitly about friendships. However, he did make some references to friendly behaviours he may show towards his peers. For example, Callum said that one of the Blobs in the Blob pictures was happy *'cause he's giving his friend a hug'*, and *'he's going to hug his friend'.*

Finn also did not spend a lot of time talking about his peers or his friendships in school. However, when I asked Finn to talk about his ideal school, he said the people in it would be *'having fun and making friends'*, which implies making friends is something he might strive to achieve in an ideal situation.

Teacher relationships

Some of the young people also talked about their relationships with their teachers in school. Ben and Sam talked about having positive relationships with teachers in school and presented a positive image of their teachers. Specifically, Ben talked about feeling happy because he is able to play with his teacher at school. And Sam made reference to his school counsellor, whom he also refers to as a teacher, as being a good friend of his.

Ben: *'A little bit sad, but mostly happy cause I can play football because my teacher plays football with me outside but not with my friends'*.

Sam: *'me and Harry are really good friends, Harry's a school counsellor'*.

Sam also described his favourite teacher as listening to him and understanding him. The use of the word *'really'* and repetitions of the word *'understands'* signifies how important this is for Sam.

Sam: *'My teachers I li like my favourite teacher's Mrs Sole she's my favourite teacher because she listens to me, she understands, she just really understands me '*.

Whilst some of the young people talked of their positive relationships with teachers, others also spoke about their experience of negative teacher interactions, which are likely to compromise their sense of belonging in school.

Ben implied that a teacher might tell you to go away.

Ben: *'Because the teacher might because they might have said go away or something'*.

Sam said that he really does not like one of his teachers.

Sam: *'I really don't like my English teacher'*.

Sam also talked about a negative experience he had with his teacher.

Sam: *'Yeh about this teacher, I was trying to uh she asked me a question so I tried to answer but she's like 'No this this this is not this is not what I'm trying to ask you no no this is not what I'm trying to ask you' and then it annoys me because this is what she was trying to ask me and she telling this is what she doesn't want to ask me so just confuses'*.

Teachers had a significant role in some of the young people's non-ideal and ideal school drawings. In Ben's drawing of his non-ideal school he talked about there being no teachers in the school because the young people in the school were too bad. This implies Ben's belief that teachers are unlikely to want to teach young people who might behave badly.

Ben: *'There's not adults cause they're too bad cause adults don't want to be there cause it's too bad'*

When Finn drew a picture of his non-ideal (worst) school he described the teacher in the school as being a *'dog teacher'* and he would be scared in this school because of the *'dog teacher'* who will eat you. When asked why the teachers would eat you, Finn said *'because they don't like people'*. He further explained that *'he usually eat people and make people angry and sad'*. Finn's dog teacher represents the teacher he would not like to have. It seems important to Finn that teachers should not cause harm and should not make people feel sad and angry. Implying the importance of positive teacher relationships.

The representation of adults in Finn's non-ideal school contrasted highly with how Finn talked about adults in his ideal school. He said that in his ideal school *'...the only adults the unicorn'*. He went on to explain that the unicorn, who represents the 'teacher' in his ideal school keeps everyone in the school happy. The dog teacher and the unicorn were prominent features of Finn's non-ideal and ideal school drawings suggesting the importance he places on adults in school.

Personality attributes

Four of the young people, Ben, Nathan, Callum, Sam and Liam talked about their experiences of peer and teacher personality attributes. All of these young people appeared to have a strong sense of how they felt people should and should not behave towards them in school, and that different personalities evoked different feelings for them.

When talking about teachers in school some of the young people viewed them positively and used words such as *'nice'* to describe them, and said that most of the teachers in school are *'nice'*.

Callum: *'Um really nice'*.

Ben: *'She's just really nice'*.

Ben: *'Nice really nice teachers. Some aren't very nice, but some are nice. Most are nice. But some aren't...they're all nice they're just all nice that's why'*.

Nathan: *'They're nice people'* and *'that um they're friendly'*.

Sam: *'He really nice'* and *'they're just really nice'*.

Some of the young people found it difficult to elaborate as to what 'nice' might mean when asked, but Ben said: *'Umm just makes what makes someone really nice for a when they're really nice and really kind to people'*.

Nathan also said that he would like to go to a school where the teachers are *'happy, friendly and always kind to people'*.

However, Liam presented varied views of his teachers and said: *'Some of them are good, some of them are bad'*.

As well as talking about the positive personality attributes of teachers in school, some of the young people also talked about the negative attributes of their teachers such as them being *'not nice, 'strict' and 'shouting'*. Some of the young people said that this made them feel *'not good'* and one young person said that this could make them feel *'sad'* and *'scared'*.

Ben: *'Not very nice. Doesn't make me feel makes me feel not good'...'They're just not very nice that's all I can basically say they're not very nice'*.

Sam: *'Just don't like her she's rude to all my friends like even people who used to be in the school say she's a really bad teacher don't go near her so just all my friends don't like her'...'One of my friends got hit by her and my other one got called an idiot by her'*.

Liam: *'Well there's Ms Helen she was really mean'*.

Nathan and Callum also described the characteristics of their teachers in their non-ideal and ideal school drawings.

When Nathan spoke about the teachers in his non-ideal (worst) school, he said that *'the teacher's always shouting at you'*. He said that he would not like the teachers to be like this *'because um when teacher's shout at me I get scared and sad'*.

These quotes suggest the importance of a teacher's personality attributes. For example are they friendly or do they shout, has upon how young people might view them and consequently behave and feel in school. This has been demonstrated in Nathan's drawings of his 'non-ideal' and 'ideal' school, where Nathan communicated, he would not want to go to a school where the teachers were '*always shouting at you*'.

Callum wanted to talk about the teacher he had at school last year and described her as being a really strict teacher.

Callum: '*Cause last year I had this really strict teacher*'

This appeared to be somewhat significant to him as he went on to describe her as '*annoying*' and she '*kept shouting*'.

When Callum drew his non-ideal (worst) school he described the teacher in this school as '*a strict teacher*' and said she is strict because she is '*shouting*' and he finds this '*annoying*'. In his ideal school he said he would want the teacher to be '*nice*' and she is not '*shouting*' and instead she is '*teaching*'.

Callum and Sam also talked about the personality attributes of their peers in school. Specifically, it appears that Callum can often perceive his peers negatively. For example, he says '*some of them are really annoying*'. Callum's use of the word '*really*' indicates that this might be a significant problem for him, and he can struggle to tolerate his peers at times. Callum refers to '*the shouting*' that he can find annoying. And said that people do not like it when people are '*shouting and being annoying*'. Callum also said that in school '*people keep distracting me*', and this seems to be something that Callum finds difficult to accept in school.

Sam spoke about the positive attributes he would like to see in his peers. He said that he liked his current school and the reason he gave for this was '*well the people are all big hearted*'. When describing his ideal school, he spoke about the people that would be in this school and commented that '*they were um they would all be like 'oh hello' and all nice*'. It therefore feels important to Sam that his peers in school show positive and friendly behaviours towards him and this contributes to how he may feel about school. When Sam was asked what helps people to make friends, Sam responded '*being nice to people*'.

Being supported

Ben, Finn, Nathan and Callum talked about their experience of being supported in school, both by adults and by their peers. Ben, Finn and Callum specifically perceive teachers to have a strong supportive role in school and recognise the value of teachers helping them in school. Many of the young people appear comfortable asking for help and support in school when they feel they need it.

Ben: *'Teachers...Just helps me work and stuff'*

Finn: *'What makes her nice?'... 'Cause she's helping me'*

Finn: *'I... and I get some help... uh I put my hand up... and the teacher helps me'*

When asked what helps in school, Finn responded *'uh the teachers'* and said, *'uh they help you do stuff'*. Finn said that he likes his teacher *'cause she's helping me'* and when asked how the teacher helps, he said *'uh she tells you what you are doing'*. Finn said it makes him happy when someone helps him, and he receives a lot of help in school.

Similarly to Finn, Nathan also views the teacher as a person that offers help and support in school. He said that *'if I'm struggling ask a teacher'*. This signifies that the teacher is someone that he feels comfortable asking for help. Nathan also said that *'the teacher will correct it for us or um or um or um underline or help us with it'*. This provides examples of how Nathan has been supported by his teacher in school.

Ben, Finn and Callum likewise talked about the supportive role their peers can play in school. They recognised the importance of peers helping each other particularly when they might be unwell, but also with their school work, or when they might be experiencing other difficulties in school.

Ben: *'Um when I am ill they help me and when I'm um ill they help me out and stuff.'*

Finn: *'He's happy...because he's helping someone...cos it's helping other people'*

Callum: *'Cause he helps me when I'm not feeling well'*

Callum: *'My friend has a pair and he let me try them out'*

It is important to Liam that friends help each other when they might be hurt. When he talked in more depth about his friend John, he said *'what makes him nice is he helps people up and he helps me up when every time I get hurt'*.

Social opportunities

Social opportunities in school appear to be an important aspect of school for many of the young people interviewed. How they experienced their social opportunities at school seems to play a significant part in how they experience school. They also talked about the importance of accessing social opportunities in school. In particular many of the young people spoke specifically about having the opportunities to play games and play with their friends. When asked, some of them said if they could change anything about school, they would like more time to go out and play.

Nathan: *'you don't do anything to anyone else but play with your friends and have fun'*.

Liam: *'I just do a lot of play and then for like one minute I'll play which is not even a lot and then I go straight back to work'*.

During the interview Ben frequently talked about being able to go out and play *'Uhhh let them out to play'* and the importance of play *'Uh because you get to play'*.

Nathan spoke about the importance of play in contributing to his experience of school. For example, when asked what he does to have fun at school, Nathan said *'play with my friends'* and he said he has fun at school when he is *'um playing with my friends'*. When asked to choose a Blob from the Blob picture that he felt was most like him, he chose a Blob and said *'he likes playing football and playing with his friends'*.

Callum also talked about play and how *'looking at everyone playing'* makes him feel happy. *'Playing games'* is something that Callum finds fun and having the opportunity to do this in school is important to him. Social times are important to Callum because the social times at school are about *'having a good time, climbing up the trees'*. This makes him happy.

Liam talked about enjoying school when he gets the opportunity to play. However, unlike Nathan who talks about his positive experiences of being able to play, Liam

feels he is not allowed to play for long enough and is made to do more work instead. Liam also talked about finding school boring, but when asked what would make school more exciting, he responded *'play'*. From the start of the interview Liam was concerned about the possibility of missing his break time. He immediately asked how long he needed to be there and said *'...I've got to run straight down and go to break'*. Ben described being able to play in his ideal school.

Ben: *'Going out to play every minute, go for lunch time every hour and go and have a good ga got stay out there for fifty hours'*

These school experiences contrast highly to Ben's current experience of school, as he reveals that despite enjoying play in school, he is currently not allowed to go out with his peers at break or lunch time.

Ben: *'Well I don't go I don't go out to play do I?'*

This implies that his current school experience contrasts highly to his ideal school experience.

Social belonging appears to be an important aspect of these young people's school experiences, and when positively experiencing each aspect addressed in relation to social belonging, this will likely enable them to view school positively. However, when they are unable to positively experience social belonging, as influenced by their peers, their teachers or access to social opportunities, this could cause them to face difficulties in school, which subsequently could impact upon them being at risk of PEX.

4.2.2 Learning opportunities

The young people interviewed talked about their experiences of learning in school. They talked positively about learning in school and implied that they could experience learning to be an enjoyable aspect of school. These young people also talked about learning as being an important part of their school experience. Two of the young people, Ben and Nathan also described their positive learning behaviours in school.

To better understand how these young people view learning in school, the experience of learning opportunities will now be discussed in relation to three sub-themes; experiencing learning as enjoyable, experiencing learning as important and positive learning behaviours.

Experiencing learning as enjoyable

Finn, Nathan, Callum and Sam all spoke about some of their learning opportunities as being a fun and enjoyable part of school. When they are able to experience learning positively this likely contributes to a wider positive school experience for them.

Finn: *'Uhh cos we usually learn stuff and have fun'*

Nathan: *'and I also learn lots of new and um exciting and fun stuff.'*

Callum: *'Because it's just fun'... 'that sometimes it's really fun'.*

Some of the young people also talked about having a favourite lesson at school and could name several other aspects of school they enjoy. These sometimes seemed to link with aspects of school they felt they were good at. These findings suggest that although these young people are at risk of school exclusion, they are still able to identify aspects of school, in particular their learning that they enjoy and view positively.

Finn: *'Uh my favourite one used to be maths, but now it's maths.'*

Finn: *'Golden time, P.E., aaand uh history.'*

Nathan: *'I learn a lot in maths because I like maths and I am good at it'.*

Callum: [in response to what does he enjoy in school] *'When we do art and maths'*

Some of the young people were excited to talk about and share some of their recent learning experiences and the specific activities that they had done or topics they had learnt about. They relayed these experiences as being positive and memorable with enthusiasm.

Finn: *'Yesterday we were learning about the body so we were.'*

Callum: *'We're building like a rocket ship the one's that go in to space'.*

Sam: *'She um my teacher made a joke at the end about um um a silver blue blob in the cup because you get to push it out the cup'.*

Callum also commented during his interview that he felt people are happy in school *'cause they like to learn'*. Nathan said that the best thing about school was *'uh learning new things which I didn't know before'*.

Experiencing learning as important

When talking about their school experiences, some of the young people talked about the positive aspects of learning and implied that learning is an important part of their school experience. Being able to learn allowed them to feel happy in school.

Nathan: *'Cause then you'd know something else that you could tell your parents that you learnt about'.*

Callum talked about his ideal school and said the important thing in this school was *'that they're actually learning'*

Callum also spoke about school being a negative experience *'Cause they're not doing any learning'.*

Sam spoke about a Blob in the Blob picture feeling happy *'because he's working really hard'.*

Positive Learning behaviours

Ben and Nathan's experiences of learning in school were also talked about in relation to their understanding of and perception of positive learning behaviours. They also referenced their ability or desire to positively demonstrate these learning behaviours. Some of the positive learning behaviours they referenced were; focusing, concentrating, listening, trying, waiting, putting their hand up and getting work done in time.

Ben: *'Cause he is listening'... 'Because they're trying'... 'Focus and concentrate and stuff'.*

Nathan: *'He's putting his hand up and waiting for the teacher to ask him'... 'Trying to ask a question'.*

Nathan: *'So you can get your work done in time'.*

Some of the young people related these positive learning behaviours to positive feelings such as happiness and therefore when they demonstrate these positive learning behaviours, they are likely to view themselves more positively.

When Ben was asked what was making one of the Blobs from the Blob pictures happy, Ben replied *'Cause he is listening'*. Ben also thought another Blob might be happy *'because they're trying'*. This shows that Ben associates good learning behaviours with feelings of happiness. Ben is therefore likely to feel happy in school when he knows he successfully meets expectations in the classroom.

Ben also understands that there are consequences for poor behaviour, *'So if you're you'll be put on ba on a bad face if you're not good'*.

The findings suggest that these young people view learning as important and talk about how learning can be enjoyable. Being able to experience learning positively may therefore help them to view school more favourably and may help to reduce their risk of school exclusion. However, when learning is not enjoyable and they are unable to engage in learning positively, this is where we may likely see difficulties occur that may correlate to them experiencing exclusions from school.

4.2.3 Ethos

Most of the young people interviewed made comments that were suggestive of the importance of school ethos. Ben, Nathan, Callum and Sam each talked about experiencing or the need to experience a positive school ethos. They talked about school ethos in relation to their actual experiences and through their ideal school drawings, where they made suggestions about how they would like their school to be.

Specifically, Ben talked about his ideal school as being a *'friendly'* and *'kind'* school.

Ben: *'friendly, it's really kind, friendly it's really kind'*, and *'there are two rules 'be kind' those are the rules, you have to be kind'*.

Ben's repetition of the word *'kind'* implies that kindness is something that Ben likely values in school.

Ben said that the people in his ideal school would be *'saying welcome this is a good school and it's a very good school and they'll be going hello how you doing?'* Ben also talked about the possibility of people feeling sad if they had to go to a school that is not positive.

When asked specifically about his own school Ben said that *'it's a real good school this school and that's all I can really say. It's a really good school'*.

Nathan also talked about school ethos, and the importance of people being happy in school.

Nathan: *'The teacher and all the children are happy'*.

Callum spoke about how he would like to go to a school where people are *'happy'*. He said in his ideal school *'that everyone would be happy and just walking around'*.

Feeling calm in school is something that Sam spoke about being important to him. He talked positively about there being a sense of calm in his ideal school. He said in his ideal school *'and just that I feel calm'*. He spoke about strategies in the school that helped him to feel calm and said *'there's a med there's a meditating bit'*. He also said *'it feels like really calm and just like nothings going on'*.

These young people appear to appreciate the ethos of a school. For example, viewing schools as being good, calm, kind and friendly places feels important to them. These young people believe that schools with qualities as these enable them to feel happy in school. Therefore, a positive school ethos feels significant in enabling these young people who are at risk of PEX to enjoy school and subsequently may help to reduce their risk of facing exclusion from school.

4.2.4 Importance of safety

Finn, Nathan and Callum talked about the need to experience safety when at school. These young people talked about aspects of school such as fighting, bullies and getting hurt that could compromise their sense of safety in school. They suggest getting hurt is something that can worry them and could therefore compromise their positive experience of school, as they strive to feel safe in school.

Finn spoke a lot about fighting and social conflict in school and this came alongside his descriptions of possible safety seeking behaviours. When Finn was asked to choose the Blob he was most like from a Blob picture, he chose the Blob sitting under the table and climbing trees to stay away from the *'fighting'* and *'dogs'*. When asked what the most important thing was to Finn in school, he replied, *'the important things is I'm safe'*.

Like Finn, Nathan also talked about the need to feel safe in school. And said that it is important to him *'that you know that no one's going to hurt you'* in school. Nathan

expressed that *'I don't want people to get hurt'*. Nathan feels that people are likely to get hurt at school due to bullying and people harming each other. In Nathan's ideal school he said that the people are feeling happy because *'they're learning and no one's bullying them'*.

Callum mentioned that in his non-ideal (worst) school the people *'have to hide in the toilet'*. This comment was made in relation to having to hide from the 'bullies' in school. This implies that 'bullying' might cause Callum to feel unsafe in school.

The importance of feeling safe in school is something we would expect to be important to all young people. However, these young people suggest that feeling unsafe in school may lead to young people not being able to learn and needing to hide in school. Ultimately this may cause the school experience to become a negative one, which may further contribute to them becoming at risk of exclusion as they respond to not feeling safe in school.

4.2.5 Self-awareness

When talking about their school experiences the young people interviewed showed elements of a self-awareness related to both their strengths and difficulties, as we would expect from a population of young people of this age. Whilst many of the young people talked about aspects of their schooling that they felt they were good at and talked about some of their identified strengths, others spoke more about their perceived difficulties and things that they found challenging at school. In parts these young people were able to talk about how their perceived strengths and/or difficulties contributed to their experience of school.

Self-awareness will be discussed under the two sub-themes; awareness of strengths and awareness of difficulties.

Awareness of strengths

Ben, Nathan and Sam all talked about their strengths and things they feel they are good at. They were able to identify things that they had been doing well in school recently like; doing *'good learning'* and *'doing good work'* at school.

Ben: *'I've been doing good learning recently...um I've been just really doing good work at school right now that's all I've been really doing'*.

When talking about his learning in school Ben also said that he finds it *'Easy. Sometimes difficult, but mostly easy'*. And went on to repeat that *'I've been doing good learning recently'*.

Nathan identified some aspects of learning that he thinks he is good at.

Nathan: *'I learn a lot in maths because I like maths and I am good at it'*.

Nathan: *'Cause I'm really good at science and maths'*.

This shows that Nathan is able to realise his strengths, has demonstrated that he understands he learns more in maths because he likes it, and it is likely that he likes it because he believes he is good at it. The awareness that Nathan has about his strengths is likely to help him understand his experiences in school and being good at something helps him to experience positive feelings.

During the interview Sam also talked about things he is good at. When talking about his drawing Sam said;

Sam: *'I'm a really good colourer aren't I?... 'really good at drawing faces. If you want me to I can draw you a really big face and... 'I'm really good at curly hair'*.

Sam is also capable of recognising his progress, saying that *'I started off really bad, but then I got really good'*.

An awareness of their strengths is likely to enable these young people to experience school positively.

Awareness of difficulties

Finn, Nathan, Callum and Liam talked about their school experiences with an awareness of the things they find to be difficult or challenging in school. This self-awareness of their difficulties likely enables them to share their difficulties with others and will enable others to provide the help they need to support them in school to overcome these difficulties. The following quotes demonstrate the difficulties or challenges these young people perceive they have.

Nathan: *'I struggle with them'... 'sometimes I read a word and I don't get it right and with my spelling I don't um most of the time I don't get my spellings always right'*.

Finn: *'It's quite tricky in maths'... 'Uh history is quite difficult'... 'What do you find difficult in history?'... 'The writing.'*

Callum: *'Science is like the most difficult thing'... 'the learning... Is really hard'.*

When asked to do some drawing during the interview Liam said; *'I'll try, I'm not that good at drawing'*. Whilst drawing his picture, Liam commented *'I'm terrible'*. After just a few minutes trying to do his drawing, Liam said *'I have no clue. I'm done, I can't draw anymore'*.

This suggests that when Liam finds something difficult, he might not want to engage in that activity.

Similarly, Sam said;

Sam: *'I'm not really good at drawing houses and backgrounds'* and *'I'm not really good at drawing sunglasses...'*

Later in the interview when asked what might make Finn not want to come to school, he said P.E. He said that he can find P.E. really hard and in particular he can find the running hard.

Finn: *'Uhh if it's P.E....cos it's usually really hard... we usually have to do the golden run I hate it.'*

Alongside an awareness of their difficulties, how some of the young people respond as a result of such difficulties, for example, not wanting to complete a drawing, or not wanting to go to school, suggests that an awareness of their difficulties could act as a barrier to them in school, specifically for those identified as being 'at risk' of PEX.

4.3 Theme 2: Threats to normalcy

A second master theme to emerge from the data was 'threats to normalcy'. 'Threats to normalcy' that emerged from the data comes from factors such as difficulties, unexpected behaviours and emotions. These 'threats to normalcy' are aspects which are likely to act as barriers to these young people in school and may compromise their 'sense of normalcy' in school. These 'threats to normalcy' identified in school, feel likely to correlate to them being placed at risk of PEX.

4.3.1 Experiencing difficulties

All the young people interviewed talked about experiencing difficulties in school. Specifically, they talked about their social difficulties in school. Five of the young people talked about their experiences of social conflict in school and Ben also talked

about his experiences of feeling socially isolated. Five of the young people spoke about their perceived difficulties in relation to their learning. The difficulties these young people placed at risk of PEX talk about in relation to school, in terms of their social difficulties and perceived difficulties with learning, appear to compromise their school experience, and may be significant upon them becoming excluded from school.

Experiencing difficulties will be discussed under the two sub-themes; social difficulties and learning as difficult.

Social difficulties

Ben referenced incidents of social conflict, in particular fighting when he was asked to draw his non-ideal (worst) school. He talked about his non-ideal school being *'Mmm just a fighting school'* where *'they have only one rule to fight you can fight'*. He said that he wouldn't like to go to a school like this *'because they're fighting and its not a very positive school'*. When asked if there was anything else he could tell me about his non-ideal school, he said *'it's just too much fighting that's all there is really...fighting'*. Ben said that it would make him feel *'sad'* if he had to go to a school like that. Ben became quite consumed when talking about his *'fighting school'* and seemed eager to portray how significant the fighting was in his non-ideal (worst) school.

Ben: *'There's only a few people that go to this school cause its fighting school.'*

Ben also talked about people in his school not being nice to him and highlights his awareness of the conflict that may arise between him and his peers.

Ben: *'Like someone that's not being very nice to me not being, like push me and kicking me, not very nice people.'*

Ben also implies that the fighting can get in the way of learning in school because the teacher is unable to pay attention and teach the lesson.

Ben: *'This Blob is basically coming in and seeing everyone fighting and the teacher's trying to get his attention and he can't.'*

Social conflict and violence were also talked about by Finn during his interview. Finn revealed that when he witnesses fighting this can make him feel scared in school.

When asked to choose the Blob he would most like to be from a Blob picture, Finn chose a Blob and said, *'he's staying away from the fighting'*. Finn said that he does not like fighting *'Cos it hurts people'*. When I asked Finn if there was much fighting in his school, he said *'there's usually fighting and bad stuff'*. He repeated this again later in the interview when he was asked what other people do in the playground, *'they are usually fighting'*.

Finn also described scenes of violence when interpreting one of the Blob pictures.

Finn: *'Because that one's stabbing that one'*.

Callum talked about experiencing several different aspects of social conflict between him and his peers.

Callum: *'Cause they're just like winding me up'*.

He also talks about his peers pushing him over;

Callum: *'Um like push me over'*

Callum said that in school he might *'play fight with other children'*. This shows that Callum also engages in some fighting behaviours in school that he might perceive to be playful.

Callum references fighting when he talks about his non-ideal (worst) school. Fighting appears to be something that Callum views negatively and said the worst thing in his non-ideal (worst) school is *'people fighting'*. In his ideal school, he said that there would be *'no fighting'* and said that *'fighting is bad'*.

Social conflict also featured during Sam's interview. When Sam talked about the social conflict he experiences, it feels as though he can perceive himself as the victim during these times and his peers are the ones that may instigate this conflict. For example, Sam refers to *'someone trying to fight me'* and he recalled a time at school when *'someone tried to fight me'*. He neglects to speak of his role during times of social conflict.

Sam: *'um like boy who was trying to fight me came up to me and um like just pulled a face at me'*.

Sam: *'He used to be really rude to me always used to try and bite me and punch me in the face'.*

Sam: *'He's punching someone'.*

Liam talked about experiencing several recent incidents of social conflict. As an example, he spoke about an interaction which resulted in social conflict, with a friend and his Dad, when he dropped some slime on the floor at their house.

Liam: *'And it wouldn't come off the floor then Olly was crying and he slapped me in the face and then Olly's Dad came up and then he shouted in my face really close'.*

Liam spoke about how he can respond negatively during social interactions when he is feeling annoyed.

Liam: *'I was about to slap him'... 'then I almost broke his leg'.*

Liam went on to explain that when he is confronted by negative behaviour he will usually respond negatively. When asked why he feels he wants to slap people he said *'Cause he did that to me and every time I get slapped I punch and kick out at anyone that hits me'.*

Later in the interview he talked about further incidents of social conflict he was involved in at school.

Liam: *'[name] he's got a whole gang apparently and he no one those guys don't like me someone pushed [name] in to [name] and then [name] pushed him so then I pushed him [name] back because he'd been pushed him so I got angry I was about to punch him just because I don't like people bullying my friends'.*

Liam: *'Um I don't know why exactly he kneed me but I think someone pushed him on me and then he thought it was me so he kneed me'.*

As well as social conflict, Ben also implied that he can experience some social isolation from his peers. This was particularly referred to in relation to Ben not being allowed to go out and play at break and lunchtimes as a result of previous incidents of social conflict.

Ben: *'Well I don't go I don't go out to play do I?'*

Ben explained that he has to stay in with the teacher.

Ben: *'Uuuh playtime and breaktime playtime and breaktime um so I just go um I stay with Miss F and I go in doors and just do activities and everyone one else goes outside and plays'.*

His use of the word 'just' implies that this might not be fulfilling to him. He says 'everyone' else goes outside and plays, this highlights his view that 'everyone' is outside but him, confirming his sense of social isolation. This social isolation will likely threaten the social opportunities he seeks.

Ben: *'Going out to play every minute, go for lunch time every hour and go and have a good ga got stay out there for fifty hours'*

Learning as difficult

The young people interviewed also spoke about many aspects of learning they can perceive as difficult. Some of the young people spoke in general terms, referring to learning or work as being hard. Others such as Sam, Nathan and Liam identified specific aspects of learning they found difficult such as reading, spelling and remembering things. Finn and Callum specifically spoke about subjects they can find difficult. Callum also attributed some of his difficulties to learning behaviours that make it hard for him to learn.

Sam: [In reference to his learning] *'it's just really hard'* and *'I can't read'*.

Nathan: [Reading and spelling] *'I struggle with them'... 'Sometimes I read a word and I don't get it right and with my spelling I don't um most of the time I don't get my spellings always right'.*

Liam: *'It's really hard...because I don't remember really anything.'*

Finn: [When asked why he does not like P.E.] *'cos it's usually really hard'*

Finn also addressed several subjects he found difficult such as maths, history and writing.

Callum: *'It's just the work is really hard'*.

Callum repeated this several times throughout his interview which further illustrates how hard he can sometimes find the work in school.

Finn: *'It's quite tricky in maths'... 'Uh history is quite difficult'... ['What do you find difficult in history?']... 'The writing.'*

Callum: *'Science is like the most difficult thing'... 'the learning... Is really hard'.*

Callum: *'I can't concentrate'*

These quotes imply these young people who are at risk of PEX can experience difficulties when accessing their curriculum, particularly when they perceive the work to be difficult. The findings also show how aware of these difficulties these young people are and suggest that they may contribute towards some of the negativity they can experience at school, when faced with work they feel they are unable to access.

4.3.2 Unexpected behaviours

When talking about their school experiences, the young people spoke about several behaviours that we would not hope to see in school. I have termed these behaviours as 'unexpected behaviours'. These 'unexpected behaviours' are suggestive as occurring as a result of or in response to an unwanted or a negatively perceived school experience. These behaviours likely result in negative consequences in school which may be putting them at an increased risk of school exclusion than their peers.

In particular these young people suggest that they behave in an unexpected way as a result of their feelings. An example of this is when Nathan shared that *'I walk out of the classroom and I don't do what I am told'*. He said that he will do this when he feels scared and sad. Nathan also said *'And when I'm angry I just don't want to do anything'*.

Liam also said *'So then I got really annoyed and I threw a chair at someone'*.

The following quotes show two examples of how Nathan may respond following an action of one of his peers.

Nathan: *'...and then if people wind me up or people being annoying then I get angry'*

Nathan: *'I hit them back which I shouldn't do'*

Liam also shared that he can display unexpected behaviours as a result of people annoying him.

Liam: *'Cause he did that to me and every time I get slapped I punch and kick out at anyone that hits me'*.

Liam later shared: *'Cause I get angry every time every time someone annoys me, I be mean, I throw stuff, I flip tables, I flip chairs, I throw ch, um bean bags at people'.*

Some of the young people also talked about displaying unexpected behaviours when they do not want to do something in school.

Sam: *'And I tried to just run away'*

Liam: *'Every time I escape school',*

In Sam's non-ideal school drawing he talked about a young person who was *'...not doing his work he's trying to climb out the window'.*

4.3.3 Emotions

When talking about their school experiences the young people alluded to experiencing a range of emotions in school. Some of which are suggestive of negatively impacting upon and compromising their school experience.

Finn can experience some negative feelings when he is in school often saying that he feels scared and upset.

Finn: *'It makes me feel scared and upset'*

Finn went on to reference feeling scared on several occasions throughout the interview, usually in response to seeing people fighting in school, but also when he gets told off. Finn said when he feels scared it can make you not like school and can make you feel sad, which consequently might make him not want to go to school.

Finn: *'You don't like school and your sad... You don't want to go to school'*

Finn also talks about feeling worried about going to school. These negative feelings that Finn experiences are likely to have a negative impact upon how he experiences school.

Nathan has spoken about some of the negative feelings he can experience at school, like *'When I'm tired or angry'*. He said when he feels like this it makes him not want to come to school *'because uh when I'm tired, I'm just more um I'm just moany and stuff'*. This shows the impact that negative feelings might have upon Nathan's willingness to engage in school.

Throughout the interview with Callum it became apparent he can also experience some negative feelings when he is at school. He talks about feeling *'annoyed'* and many aspects at school that contribute to him feeling this way. Callum appears to struggle to manage these negative feelings which contribute to incidents of social conflict as previously discussed in section 4.3.1.

Liam talked about feeling angry and feeling 'rage' in school. This 'rage' can cause Liam to throw stuff in school and therefore can negatively influence his behaviours in school.

Liam: *'Cause I get angry every time every time someone annoys me I be mean...'*

Liam: *'Um something that I can put my rage on'... 'that's why I run around and throw stuff'.*

4.4 Theme 3: Experience of injustice

A third master theme to emerge across the data was the 'experience of injustice' these young people talked about, which likely impacts upon how these young people experience school. This experience of injustice results from these young people believing they are being victimised and/or treated unfairly in school. The injustice that these young people experience in school is suggestive of relating to their risk of school exclusion as they likely respond negatively as a result of feeling this injustice.

4.4.1 Victimisation

Nathan and Callum talked about experiencing injustice in school in relation to victimisation. Nathan, Callum and Sam can view themselves as victims in school, particularly during times of social conflict.

This sense of victimisation can cause Nathan to feel annoyed or angry.

Nathan: *'If people wind me up or people being annoying then I get angry'.*

Nathan talks about himself as being the victim of bullying.

Nathan: *'Um when people bully me or say things that I don't like'*

The frequency Nathan talks about incidents of bullying implies he encounters this a lot in school.

Nathan: *'Sometimes when people bully me'.*

When asked how this makes him feel, Nathan said *'upset'*.

Nathan explains that when this happens *'I say something um mean to them'* or *'sometimes I hit them back which I shouldn't do'*. Nathan therefore will often respond negatively and act out towards his peers aggressively, although Nathan knows that this is not how he should react.

Nathan was asked to choose a Blob from the Blob picture he would most like to be like. Nathan chose a Blob and said he would most like to be this one *'because no body's bullying him or um being mean to him'* and said the Blob was *'try and ignore the people that bully him'*.

Nathan admits when he is bullied, he will often bully people back and then he does not want to admit he has done this, so will lie to the adults in school about what has happened. Nathan has explained that this causes him to experience negative feelings and he does not feel happy about this. This shows us that Nathan has some understanding of how to respond in this situation, despite not always behaving in this way.

Nathan: *'Cause I don't like it when people bully me, cause when they bully me then I bully them back and then when I bully them back I don't feel happy at all and I lie about it'*

Whether Nathan is a true victim of bullying, or whether he perceives himself to be being bullied when there are disagreements between himself and his peers, what this tells us is this is having a negative impact on how Nathan views himself in school. Nathan shows us that this is an aspect of school that he would like to change.

Nathan: [in reference to his ideal school] *'They're learning and no one's bullying them'*

Nathan's comments also suggest that being bullied may impact upon his ability to learn in school, as when he talks about people learning he comments that no one is bullying them.

Callum also talks about experiencing victimisation in terms of bullying. When he was asked to choose a Blob/s that was most like him from the Blob pictures, he chose his Blobs and said they were like him because they are *'being bullied by this one'* and *'because he is being bullied'*. Bullying is something that Callum seeks to avoid in school and said that he would not like to go to his 'non-ideal (worst) school *'um cause*

people bully you', and therefore, bullying appears to me a significant aspect of school that may contribute to some of his negative experiences of school. Callum describes his peers winding him up and pushing him over, further suggesting his sense of victimisation.

Callum: *'Cause they're just like winding me up...um like push me over'*

Sam also shared his experiences of feeling victimised by his peers. He talks about getting a detention because someone tried to fight him. He also spoke about this person pulling at his face, further suggesting his feelings of being victimised by his peers.

Sam: *'Yesterday I went to detention because someone tried to fight me and then when I come in again this morning someone um like boy who was trying to fight me came up to me and um like just pulled a face at me'.*

4.4.2 Unfair treatment

The young people's experience of injustice in school also relates to the unfair treatment they feel they experience. This unfair treatment relates to the things they might not be allowed to do, the things they are expected to do and the ways they are treated in school. Their view of being treated unfairly or fairly is likely to impact upon how these young people at risk of PEX perceive and consequently behave in school.

Ben had an understanding that there are rules in school and these can restrict what he is and is not allowed to do in school, but he did not show an awareness of why these rules might be in place. He perceives he is not allowed to do things in school, but may not understand the reasons why.

Ben: *'but they don't let me'... 'they just don't let us do that'.*

Ben: *'And that's the one I would... that's the one I am and that's the one I would like to do in the playground but they don't let me.'*

This quote highlights the idea that Ben would like to be doing one thing in school, but is not allowed and is likely to view this as unfair.

Many of the young people talked about being treated unfairly by others in school.

Ben: *'When people aren't very nice to me.'*

Sam: *'Then I'm the one that gets told off when they try to head butt me or push me in to a wall I'm the one that gets told off'.*

Nathan: *'When somebody gets me in trouble and I didn't do something. Cause um yesterday I had an accident with that when my arm was up he walked in to it and I got in to trouble for that'.*

Nathan also said: *'Sometimes I don't like school'*. This was in response to his peers getting him into trouble when he did not feel he had done anything wrong.

This quote by Nathan implies the importance he places on being treated fairly by teachers in school; *'So if you um make a mistake you wouldn't be in trouble or someone won't get angry at you for doing it'.*

Sam: *'I was trying to uh she asked me a question so I tried to answer but she's like 'No this this this is not this is not what I'm trying to ask you no no this is not what I'm trying to ask you' and then it annoys me because this is what she was trying to ask me and she telling this is what she doesn't want to ask me so just confuses'*

Liam made reference several times throughout his interview to times when he felt he had not been treated fairly in school.

Liam's quotes;

'I just do a lot of play and then for like one minute I'll play which is not even a lot and then I go straight back to work'.

'Because I had to read in three days three times a row once and that really annoyed me'.

'Had to only do one but I had to do three so then I got really annoyed and I threw a chair at someone'.

'Getting detention for nothing'.

'She was being mean to me I was crying because I got no playtime and I ran out and then she keeps finding me and sending me home'.

'Um I don't know why exactly why he kneed me but I think someone pushed him on me and then he thought it was me so he kneed me'.

Liam seems to think many things that happen to him at school are unfair. For example, he feels it is unfair he cannot play for longer, he has to read a lot, gets a detention for nothing and how teachers treat him. These quotes from Liam suggest that he does not always agree with how he is treated in school and this is likely to cause Liam to view many of his school experiences negatively.

4.5 Theme 4: Experience influencing factors

Although not all the young people mentioned external influencing factors, three of them did talk about external factors which may impact upon how they feel and/or behave when they are in school, and may therefore influence them becoming AROSE. Two young people talked about their worries related to their family. One young person said that when in school he worries his mum might get hurt. Another young person spoke about experiencing feelings of sadness related to him not seeing his Dad. Two of them spoke about experiencing trouble sleeping. One young person said that he can struggle to sleep and linked this to feeling annoyed and becoming angry when people annoy him because he feels tired. Another young person said he has problems and can never get to sleep. This means he can feel grumpy when he wakes up in the morning. He also said that when tired he will put his head in the desk at school.

4.5.1 Family worries

Sam said that he worries at school *'that my mum gets hurt'*. Sam did not want to elaborate on why he thinks his mum might get hurt when he is at school, it is apparent that these thoughts are on his mind when he is at school and are significant enough for him to mention during his interview. This quote from Sam, although only a brief comment, suggests that external factors such as family may be a distraction at school and could impact upon how he thinks, feels and likely behaves in school.

Similarly, Liam made reference to his family throughout his interview. Specifically, Liam wanted to spend time towards to the end of the interview talking about his Dad.

Liam: *'I used to have a Dad but my Dad betrayed us and he left us...so, my first Dad was called Nick, no not Nick that was Nick is my step Dad and Tim was my real Dad but I don't have a Dad. I don't have a Dad, my Dad apologised to my Mum then he locked my Mum locked him out but wanted him to stay... But I don't, I haven't got to see my Dad in about four years now.'*

Liam said it can make him feel sad he has not seen his Dad in so long. Liam seemed to be quite preoccupied by these feelings of loss about his Dad. He also wanted to tell me about his siblings, and this demonstrated a sense of importance he places on his family by wanting to talk about them during his interview.

4.5.2 Troubled sleep

Another external influencing factor that Sam spoke a lot about during his interview was sleep.

Sam: *'Um whenever I go to bed I have a problem that I can't ever go to sleep, I try to go to sleep but I can't, I'm always wide awake, but when I wake up in the morning I'm always so grumpy'*.

This quote suggests that Sam has difficulties sleeping. Sam implies that the difficulties he has sleeping can influence how he feels particularly when he wakes up in the morning. Sam said that he also *'...have bad dreams a lot'* and will impact on his ability to have a good night's sleep.

Sam implies that his troubled sleep can cause him to feel tired. He said people will know that he is tired when he is at school because he will often put his head on the desk. Using the Blob pictures, he chose the Blob that was most like him and said he was most like him because *'he's always tired and I'm always tired and whenever I just like dose off my teacher's always like 'get back up you need to do your work' and I'm just not'*.

This quote from Sam therefore suggests that his tiredness as a result from his difficulties sleeping can impact negatively upon his ability to engage in school, and ultimately his school experience.

Nathan also referenced difficulties with sleep during his interview.

Nathan: *'Cause I struggle to sleep'*.

Nathan went on to say that this can cause him to often come to school feeling tired and angry.

Nathan: *'Cause I struggle to sleep and then if people wind me up or people being annoying then I get angry'... 'I hit them back which I shouldn't do'*

This shows how external factors like sleep may have a negative impact upon how he engages in school and suggests that Nathan's lack of sleep may correlate to some occasions to his negative experiences in school.

These findings are suggestive of the importance of recognising the influence that external factors outside of school may have upon a young person's experience at school and consequently their increased likelihood of becoming AROSE.

4.6 Chapter summary

An analysis of the data using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) has identified four master themes; a sense of normalcy, threats to normalcy, experience of injustice and external influencing factors. The findings discussed in this chapter, organised under each of these themes allows us to better consider how young people age 7 to 11 years, who have been identified as being at risk of PEX experience school. This has also developed our understanding of how these young people's school experiences may relate to them becoming at increased risk of exclusion from school. The findings presented here will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter against the existing literature, whilst answering the proposed research questions and addressing the initial aims of the research.

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This study set out to better understand the school experiences of a population of young people, age 7 to 11 years, who had been identified by their school as being at risk of PEX. I wanted to identify factors that may contribute to them being AROSE, what factors of school are important to them and what might be able to support them, to better inform intervention practices. Specifically, this study aimed to address a gap in the literature, by working with a distinct population of young people who had been identified as being at risk of PEX, within the Primary phase of school. This study used semi-structured interviews and an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to answer the main research question and it's four sub-questions:

- ❖ How do young people age 7 to 11 years, identified as being at risk of PEX by their school, talk about their school experiences?
 - What are the perceived barriers in school for young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX?
 - What do young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX think helps/could help them in school?
 - What are the important aspects of school for young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX?
 - How do young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX feel in school?

The following chapter will explore the research findings that have been identified throughout Chapter 4 in relation to each of the research questions. The findings will also be considered in relation to the existing literature that has been discussed in Chapter 2. I will explore how the findings make contributions to the literature and how these might help illuminate our understandings of school exclusion. This chapter will then conclude with a summary of key issues to consider.

5.2 Summary of findings

The findings from this study have allowed us to develop our understanding of the school experiences of a population of young people age 7 to 11 years, who have been identified as being at risk of PEX. This is important because it allows us to better consider how their school experiences may relate to them becoming at increased risk of exclusion from school.

An important finding from this study is that CYP who are at risk of PEX appear to experience or desire normal experiences in school. For example, they demonstrate a need for social belonging, learning opportunities, they show self-awareness, they want to feel safe, experience a positive school ethos and to experience justice. This notion may appear simple; however, it is rather complex due to the fact these young people can also encounter difficulties in school meaning they sometimes cannot participate in normal experiences as they would like. The systems put in place can often further compromise their access to these normal school experiences.

A strength of this study's findings is identifying these young people's hopes for normalcy in school and informing us they want to experience school like their peers. Therefore, these findings tell us we need to support these young people to be able to achieve this sense of normalcy. This can contradict many of our assumptions that young people who AROSE likely view school differently and do not strive for the same opportunities as their non at risk peers, for example to socialise and to learn. Therefore, rather than limiting these experiences, we need to ensure these young people are being supported to overcome any presenting difficulties so they can achieve a sense of normality in school. This will also likely reduce their experience of injustice, which will further allow them to accomplish normality.

5.3 Discussion of findings in relation to the research questions

5.3.1 How do young people age 7 to 11 years, identified as being at risk of PEX by their school, talk about their school experiences?

In considering the above research question, the findings presented in the previous chapter suggest that young people, age 7 to 11 years, who have been identified as being at risk of PEX talk about their school experiences in relation to what we might describe as 'expected talk'. These are aspects of school that these young people discussed that could be considered 'normal' for a population of young people their age. In contrast these young people also spoke about their school experiences in

relation to some of the difficulties they encounter in the school setting, some of which are likely to be influential upon them becoming at risk of PEX.

Expected talk

Findings presented in the previous chapter suggest these young people who have been identified as being at risk of PEX, in the primary phase, talk about their school experiences in a way we would expect young people to talk about their school experiences. They talked about many aspects of school they value such as social belonging, learning opportunities, school ethos and being safe in school. They were also able to talk with an awareness of self, showing an awareness of their strengths in school, balanced by an understanding of their difficulties in school. At times the young people talked about these aspects in a positive way and were able to recall positive examples. On other occasions the young people talked about these aspects of school in relation to their hopes for school and what they might desire. These visions were particularly apparent when the young people talked about their non-ideal (worst) school and ideal school drawings.

Social belonging, learning opportunities, school ethos, being safe and their self-awareness appear to be protective factors for these young people identified as being at risk of PEX as they contribute towards more enjoyable school experiences and are aspects of school that these young people appear to value highly. However, when they are unable to engage in these normal experiences, this is where problems may arise and these young people subsequently may find themselves placed at risk of school exclusion. I will now discuss the notion of 'expected talk' in relation to each of these identified factors.

A need for social belonging

All the young people implied a need for social belonging in school. Baumeister and Leary (1995) defined social belonging as the extent to which people feel they are accepted, respected, included and supported by those around them (Prince and Hadwin, 2013). Social belonging emerged strongly throughout the findings through the participants talk about peer relationships, teacher relationships, personality attributes and support. These findings are unsurprising, given that from an early age we as humans have a desire to communicate with those around us, and social belonging is identified as a basic psychological human need. When this need for

social belonging is satisfied, it is suggested that positive social, behavioural and psychological outcomes are possible (Prince and Hadwin, 2013).

Many of the young people in the current study spoke about the positive relationships they experience in school both with their peers and their teachers. They also spoke about the importance of social times in school and how an increase in opportunities to play in school would make school a more positive experience. Belongingness is critical to success in school and has been linked to positive school engagement, motivation and academic achievement, and is suggestive of being a protective factor for young people in school (Prince and Hadwin, 2013). In particular, positive friendships are important in developing a young person's sense of belonging in school and the literature tells us a reduced sense of belonging is likely to influence school disengagement (DfE, 2019b). The young people interviewed have suggested that they also have a desire for social belonging and social belonging appears particularly important for those young people who are at risk of PEX, given the correlations between social belonging and successful outcomes in school. Therefore, instead of limiting the social experiences and social opportunities of this population of young people, we should be supporting them to allow them to achieve positive social belonging in the hope of supporting more positive outcomes in school.

Learning opportunities

The young people interviewed talked about the opportunities to learn in school. They talked about the importance of learning and were able to identify elements of their learning they enjoyed or felt they were good at. This may seem surprising from a group of young people who are at risk of PEX, as in the literature young people who are experiencing difficulties in school are frequently viewed as disengaged from school and their learning opportunities (Cefai and Cooper, 2010). However, the notion that learning is important and can be an enjoyable experience are views we might expect to hear from young people who are not AROSE. The young people interviewed in the current study spoke about their positive learning experiences when they were able to have fun in lessons. Many of the subjects or activities these young people appeared to enjoy also seemed to correlate to their belief in their ability. For example, they were more likely to enjoy a subject in which they viewed themselves as being good. Therefore, what these findings demonstrate is that young people who

have been identified as being at risk of PEX can talk about learning in school positively. This is an important finding suggesting that young people who are AROSE might value the opportunities to learn just like the rest of their peer group, and positive learning opportunities may be significant in helping to reduce the risk of school exclusion.

Self-awareness

All the young people interviewed demonstrated a self-awareness throughout their interviews. We would hope to see a sense of awareness developing in CYP as it allows them to identify their strengths and weaknesses, allowing them a better understanding of themselves. In particular, three of the young people were aware of their strengths in school, talking about being good at colouring and drawing and enjoying maths. Four of the young people also identified difficulties they felt they had in school. Having this awareness of their strengths and difficulties can help young children to communicate to those around them as to what their skills and difficulties might be. This in turn will better allow the people working with them to understand how to build upon existing skills and how to support them in areas they might be struggling. Continuing to develop these young people's self-awareness therefore feels important, particularly for young people AROSE to enable school to become a more positive experience for these young people.

School ethos

As we might expect school ethos, and in particular a positive school ethos was addressed when these young people talked about their school experiences. School ethos has often been discussed in the literature, particularly the literature focussed on school exclusions as being a notable protective factor for young people in school (Oldfield et al., 2016). School ethos, is therefore an aspect of school that we might already assume as being an important and influential part of a young person's school experience. Although much of the literature has focussed on school ethos in respect of its demographics, physical space and culture (Parker et al. 2016), in the current study the young people specifically addressed the need for their school to be nice, kind, friendly and welcoming. The young people described a school with an ethos such as this as being a good school. A school with an ethos such as this was talked about by the young people as allowing them to feel happy and positive in school.

These views are further suggestive of school ethos being a protective factor in school, particularly for those young people identified as being AROSE, as it likely determines how these young people view and feel about their school.

Importance of safety

As we might expect, when talking about their school experiences, these young people talked about the need to feel safe in school. They specifically spoke about staying away from fighting and bullies in school and talked about not wanting anyone to hurt them in school. These young people talking about the need to feel safe in school feels significant if we consider Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, which outlines security and safety as basic needs that need to be met to achieve self-actualisation. Therefore, it is important to consider the safety of young people in school, to allow them to be able to achieve and be successful within their learning environment (Maslow, 1943). If these young people AROSE are not always experiencing a sense of safety in school, due to the perceived fighting and violence within their environment, or their experience of bullies in school, we may consider this 'safety' or lack of, as a contributing factor to some of the difficulties they might be experiencing. This finding suggests that schools might need to ensure they are providing an environment that supports the identified needs of these young people, ultimately ensuring their feelings of safety and security to allow them to positively engage in school (Solomon and Thompson, 2013), and reduce their risk of school exclusion.

Talk in relation to difficulties

When talking about their school experiences, the young people interviewed also talked about their school experiences in relation to some of the difficulties they encounter. They talked about many aspects of school that may present as risk factors to young people identified as being AROSE; social difficulties, difficulties with learning, their behaviours, unfair treatment and the experience of victimisation and external factors outside of school. Each of these aspects, or potential barriers in school are likely to be contributing towards the difficulties these young people have in school, causing them to be at an increased risk of school exclusion in comparison to the majority of their peers. It feels likely that to reduce these young people's risk of being excluded from school, competencies and experiences in each of these areas should be addressed and supported to eliminate potential risk factors, causing them

to experience fewer challenges in school, and ultimately reducing the need to formally exclude.

I will now discuss how these young people talked about their experienced difficulties in school under the headings; social difficulties, difficulties with learning, unexpected behaviours, unfair treatment/victimisation and external factors.

Social difficulties

Schools can often be described as complex social systems (Periera and Lavoie, 2018) and therefore it seems unsurprising that young people can experience social difficulties, whilst trying to navigate their way through school. All the young people interviewed talked in relative depth about the challenges they can experience with their peers in school. On occasion some of the young people talked about actual incidents of social conflict with their peers. For example, Callum talked about his peers winding him up and pushing him over, Liam talked about slapping, kicking out and punching and Sam talked about people trying to fight him. The findings of the current study have parallels to those found in Parker et al. (2016), stating that pupils who had experienced an exclusion from school had experienced difficulties with peer relationships prior to their exclusion. Parker et al.'s (2016) findings however were represented by the voices of parents and so it is valuable to have a more informed understanding through the voices of these young people. This finding helps us to better understand how significantly social difficulties can impact CYPs school experience.

Many of the young people interviewed referenced incidents of social conflict within their non-ideal (worst) school drawings or when choosing Blobs in the Blob pictures and made strong references to scenes of fighting. These findings suggest that these young people who are AROSE can view their experiences of school in terms of their social conflicts with their peers, and imply that they are experiencing social difficulties whilst in school. Due to the systems schools try to put in place to support them, this can often lead to them experiencing further social difficulties in relation to social isolation, as they are often unable to go out and socialise with their peers in order to reduce the likelihood of negative incidents occurring. However, by doing this we are likely compromising their sense of belonging in school which may further compromise their positive school experiences. Given that we know social belonging can be an

important factor in helping young people to achieve positive outcomes in school, it feels as though these young people who are AROSE should be further supported to overcome these social difficulties and eliminate them as a probable risk factor to school exclusion.

Difficulties with learning

When talking about school, the young people interviewed made reference to some of the difficulties they experience in their learning. Specifically, Sam and Finn referenced learning as being 'hard'. And Callum and Sam spoke about specific subjects that they found difficult. Nathan also specifically said he can struggle to read, and Callum said that he cannot concentrate at school. Therefore, they are suggesting that certain aspects of their learning in school can be a barrier for them, causing them to experience difficulties in school. The literature tells us that being presented with learning opportunities perceived as inaccessible by young people may lead to their disengagement in school (Cefai and Cooper, 2010). Wise and Upton (1998) also found a challenging curriculum could be a risk factor to behaviour difficulties for young people in school, although their findings are now somewhat dated. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy also suggests that people's beliefs about their own capabilities can influence how they think, feel and behave (Bandura, 1994). Therefore, how young people view their learning capabilities is likely to be influential upon how they present in school. The findings of the current study further highlight the possible impact that perceived difficulties or challenges accessing learning can have upon young people's experiences of school.

Unexpected behaviours

Some of the difficulties these young people talked about were in reference to their behaviours in school. Some of the behaviours specifically mentioned were; running away, escaping school, slapping, punching, kicking, hitting, throwing chairs and not doing what they are told. The young people talked about these behaviours occurring due to them feeling angry, annoyed, sad and scared. This suggests that these young people might behave the way they do as a result of their internal feelings and/or related needs. The literature has alluded to the idea that often schools are unable to understand the difference between 'poor' and 'disturbed' behaviour (Panayiotopoulos and Kerfoot, 2007), resulting in punitive approaches being used, such as school

exclusion. However, for whatever reason this behaviour might be occurring it is felt that schools often have to resort to exclusion because of the increasing level of intimidating and violent behaviour of their pupils that pose a risk to staff and pupil safety. The findings from this study have shown that often young people AROSE are displaying negative behaviours in school which appear to be negatively impacting upon their school experience, and result in them becoming excluded from school.

Unfair treatment/victimisation

The young people interviewed talked about their experiences of injustice in school. They spoke about experiencing injustice in relation to the unfair treatment they experienced from their teachers, often saying that they are not allowed to do things in school and getting in to trouble or told off for things they felt unfair. Often being treated unfairly and unequally is a common grievance of pupils who are perceived as disruptive and challenging in school (Pomeroy, 1999). These young people who experience difficulties in school feel as though their points of view and opinions are not listened to or valued by others which negatively impacts upon how they view school (Hajdukova, 2014). In previous literature students have often defended their behaviour in school as a rightful and justified reaction to what they regarded as unfair treatment by teachers (Cefai and Cooper, 2010). The literature implies that when pupils feel that they are treated unfairly by their teachers, we are more likely to see them engage in disruptive and challenging behaviour (Hajdukova, 2014).

From the findings of the current study there is also an implied sense that these young people experience injustice in school in relation to victimisation from their peers. For example, they spoke about being bullied and people being mean to them. This experience of bullying in school only adds to the sense of victimisation and injustice felt by these young people (Cefai and Cooper, 2010). This experience of injustice in school felt by young people who are at risk of school exclusion is therefore only likely to exacerbate their difficulties further as they react and behave in response to these experiences that they perceive to be unjust.

External difficulties

The literature has already implied that complicated home circumstances can impact upon the ability of young people to effectively manage themselves in school (Farouk,

2017). It is therefore no surprise that when talking about their experiences of school, these young people also mentioned external factors, and implied that these were influential upon their experience of school. Sam and Liam were both eager to talk about their family worries. Sam claimed he worried about his Mum whilst he is in school and Liam talked about his Dad and how he missed him. This further confirms findings by Parker et al. (2016), who found that family circumstances can act as possible risk factors to school exclusion. This likely happens due to the young people's pre-occupied worries and thoughts about family, which may detract from their ability to engage in school. Sam and Nathan also implied that troubled sleep can impact upon how they experience school. For example, Sam talked about having bad dreams which meant that he can often feel tired in the morning and this can cause him to dose off and subsequently get in to trouble in school. Nathan also talked about having trouble sleeping, which caused him to feel angry at school. These findings further signify the importance of recognising potential risk factors that occur outside of school, but that still might be influential upon the young people's school experience.

It is important however that we consider not all young people in the current study mentioned external factors, which implies these may not be something that impacts every young person who is AROSE. However, what it does do is remind us of the importance of still recognising the interrelated contexts that exist around CYP and their influence upon their experience of school (Pritchett, 2014), even if external factors are unlikely to be a sole contributor when considering the difficulties CYP who are at risk of PEX are experiencing in school.

Having discussed some of the difficulties these CYP who are at- risk of PEX are experiencing in school, it feels important to consider research that has specifically addressed sources of resilience that are felt as necessary in supporting CYP to overcoming the challenges or risks CYP face in their lives. In particular educational resilience has been stipulated as being key to success for CYP in school (Morrison and Allen, 2007). Morrison and Allen (2007) proposed that there are several important aspects to consider in supporting the development of resilience in CYP; the classroom, peer support, the school as a whole, family support and expectations. The research by Morrison and Allen (2007) suggest that we should be building on these protective factors to build resilience in CYP, to support them to overcome their

difficulties and challenges, notably in school. This feels significant when we consider the findings of this study and the notion that CYP at risk of PEX not only enjoy aspects of school and these can act as protective factors, but also, they can experience difficulties which impact upon their engagement in school and likely place them at increased risk of school exclusion. Therefore, by supporting the resilience of these CYP, this can support them in achieving educational success and help to reduce their risk of being excluded from the school system.

5.3.2 What are the perceived barriers in school for young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX?

The young people interviewed talked about many aspects of school that may present as barriers to them and likely influence how they experience of school.

In particular, social difficulties played a significant part of the young people's interviews and seem to present as a prominent barrier for them in school. All the young people in the current study implied they can experience social conflict and negative interactions with their peers in school. These findings are somewhat unsurprising as children who are AROSE usually experience SEMH/EBD, and the literature commonly expresses how young people with SEMH/EBD are at high risk of experiencing negative peer relationships and often social isolation, which adversely impacts on their school experience (Banks et al., 2010). Some of the young people in the current study also specifically spoke about fighting in school and talked about how the fighting could make them feel sad and scared, and expressed they try to avoid any violence in school. It may seem surprising these young people want to avoid fighting and violence, when often adults feel that CYP AROSE are choosing to engage in such conflicts. Additional studies like that of Pereira and Lavoie (2018) also found difficulties with friendships were influential upon young people's experiences of school and Wise and Upton (1998) too found poor behaviour in school was often as a consequence of CYP's social difficulties.

Parents interviewed in Parker et al.'s (2016) research stated that they felt the social times in school were a barrier for their children who had been excluded from school. They felt it was during these times negative incidents were likely to occur between their child and their peers. Findings from the current study support this, and contribute to a clearer understanding of the impact of social difficulties on young people's school experience.

The relationships these young people have with their teachers can also present as a barrier for them in school when the relationship between a young person and a teacher is a negative one. Pomeroy (1999) also proposed that difficult relationships between pupils and their teachers was a common factor to school exclusion. The current research supports this and indicates that CYP's negative interactions with adults in their school can impact upon both their behaviour and their experience of school.

Cefai and Cooper (2010) found that these poor relationships with an adult can cause the young person to experience self-helplessness, a sense of failure and disempowerment. One young person in the current study spoke about experiencing negative feelings in school when the teacher had not been nice. In the current study a young person also shared that the perception they have of their teacher can impact upon their behaviour. For example, when they view their teacher to be shouting, or being strict, this can cause them to engage in aggressive behaviours. Similar findings were echoed by Lee (2007) (as cited in Hajdukova et al., 2014) who found negative teacher/pupil relationships could lead to school disengagement and subsequently poor academic attainment. It is therefore important to recognise the value of establishing positive relationships between adults and children in school that are founded upon mutual respect (Goodman and Burton, 2010).

This study also illuminates our understanding as to how CYP at risk of PEX may experience learning in school, with many talking about aspects of their learning they can find difficult such as reading. They also talked of many subjects they do not enjoy in school because they find them hard. CYP who find aspects of learning difficult and who may doubt their own academic capabilities may not want to engage in certain learning tasks and instead could withdraw, give up quickly and/or use their behaviour to avoid such tasks (Bandura, 1994). Therefore, being presented with learning opportunities perceived as inaccessible by young people may lead to their disengagement in school (Cefai and Cooper, 2010). This can leave them becoming excluded from their learning opportunities, particularly if they do not receive the necessary support to help them overcome such difficulties (Cefai and Cooper, 2010).

The difficulties young people may experience in their learning may therefore act as a barrier to them in school. These findings therefore imply we need to work to ensure the curriculum and learning opportunities we are expecting CYP to engage in are

accessible and promote challenge at an appropriate level, to facilitate learning and development as opposed to hindering it.

The experience of injustice in school has also been identified as a barrier for young people who are AROSE. Within the current study a young person shared that an unexpected response from a teacher in school could cause them to respond negatively when they perceived they were being treated unfairly by that teacher. These findings replicate those of Hajdukova et al. (2014), who also found young people likely experience frustration, anger and sadness alongside extreme behaviours when perceiving they have been treated unfairly in school. In the current study, many of the young people also talked about experiencing unfair treatment and victimisation in school as a result of bullying. This adds to the evidence found in Parker et al. (2016) who found a prevalence of incidents of bullying for children who had been excluded from school. The current study has also established that bullying can make these young people feel angry and annoyed and would cause them to retaliate, which subsequently causes them to get in to trouble at school.

In the current study some of the young people highlighted external factors such as family worries and difficulties with sleep as impacting on how they feel, and consequently engage and behave when they are in school. It is therefore important to recognise external factors as potential barriers for young people AROSE in school. In my experience it is not uncommon for education professionals to attribute poor pupil behaviours in school to circumstances external to school, such as home and family, and therefore it may seem unsurprising that the CYP interviewed have highlighted external factors as barriers for them in school. A range of literature too has recognised the significance of external factors on how CYP are likely to behave in school. For example, Munn and Lloyd (2005) found factors relating to the home context contributed towards young people's school exclusion.

5.3.3 What do young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX think helps/could help them in school?

Throughout this study the importance of adults in school came across as highly significant to the population of young people interviewed. The adults in school have therefore been identified as a factor that will likely help Primary age pupils who have been identified as being at risk of PEX engage more positively in school. In particular, the young people interviewed appear to value the support they receive from adults in

school and one young person said it makes them feel happy when the teacher gives them help in school. Findings similar to these were also found in Parker et al. (2016), when parents expressed that teaching assistants in school were an important source of support for their child. Teaching assistants were deemed helpful when they understood the child's needs and when they knew the child well, this allowed them to be able to positively advocate for that child within the school environment (Parker et al., 2016). This study therefore supports findings by Parker et al. (2016) but manages to use the views of young people directly to highlight the important role of adult support for young people at risk of PEX.

Parker et al. (2016) concluded in their study that support from adults in school could only be helpful if they had received appropriate training on complex needs. However, other research like that of Robinson (2014) found the positive relationship between an adult and a young person alone enabled Primary age children to enjoy school, achieve their potential, and develop a sense of security in school. The current study has provided further evidence of the value young people place on the relationship they develop with the adults in school. One young person shared that feeling valued by his teacher enabled him to form positive relationships with other people in school, allowed him to feel listened to and understood which he expressed as being helpful. Another young person spoke about being happy in school because they were able to play football with their teacher and suggests they value this relationship with their teacher. Therefore, we have developed a clearer understanding of the significance of adult support, not only the explicit support they provide, but also the quality of these supportive relationships and the value young people place on these.

Peer relationships also emerged within this study as a factor that could support children in school. This echoes findings found in Berndt (2002), who reported that positive social networks improved the school experience for young people and protected them from facing adversities in school. Within the current study, the young people specifically shared that their friends contribute to them feeling happy in school, and they particularly enjoyed having opportunities to play with their peers in school. Many of the young people also explicitly spoke about their friends helping them with 'stuff' and helping them when they are hurt or unwell. This shows the value peer relationships, and friendships can have in making school a positive experience for those at risk of PEX. Some of the young people also spoke about friendships

having a protective role in school, and this likely relates to the value CYP place on feeling safe and their peers therefore have a role in enabling them to feel protected in school.

5.3.4 What aspects of school are important for young people identified by their school as being at risk of PEX?

The young people in the current study talked a lot about friendships in school and placed value on having friends in school. Many of the young people talked about the quantity of friends they have at school. Friendships also played a significant part in many of the young people's 'ideal school' drawings, which show they strive towards having positive friendships, therefore further signifying the importance of their peers and friendships in school. They also talked about friends making them feel happy and making them laugh and it is important to them that their friends have positive qualities like being nice, friendly and not hurting them.

Hayden and Ward (1996) interviewed Primary age pupils who had already been excluded from school and found that access to a peer group was important to them. Hayden and Ward (1996) also found that children who had been excluded from school often wanted to return to school to be with their friends. Given that Hayden and Ward's (1996) findings are dated, this study tells us access to a positive peer group is still important to Primary age pupils, in particular, those who are at risk of PEX, in today's context.

Pereira and Lavoie (2018) found the social aspects of school to be significant to young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. In the current study these findings were replicated across the population of young people deemed to be at risk of PEX. In particular, the young people in the current study talked about having the opportunity to play in school. Play was important in making school a fun and enjoyable place and the young people suggested they would like to have more opportunities to be able to play in school. My experience tells me that young people who are at risk of PEX often have their social times restricted due to the difficulties they can experience during these times. Therefore, these findings imply that further consideration should be given to the detriment of depriving CYP of the opportunity to socialise and play in school. Doing so may negatively impact on their experience of school and subsequently their behaviours, given the impact that restricted social

times is likely to have upon their sense of belonging in school, and the importance of social belonging upon wider outcomes.

The current study has been useful in highlighting the importance of adults in school to young people who are at risk of PEX. It is important to these young people that they have positive relationships with the adults working with them and want to feel valued by them. Hajdukova et al. (2014) found that when working with young people with SEBD, perceived or actual treatment they experienced from adults in school was important to them. Trotman (2015) also highlighted the importance of pastoral support in schools and Obsuth (2016) reported the significance of relationships on being a predictor of emotional well-being in school. Therefore, positive teacher/pupil relationships are key for healthy development and are important for positive pupil outcomes (Hajdukova et al., 2014), and drawing upon findings from this study should be considered when supporting pupils who are at risk of PEX.

What was interesting about the findings that emerged from this study was how perceptive the young people were to adult attributes. Many of the young people talked about wanting the adults in their school to be nice, kind, friendly and/or happy. They felt strongly that adults in school should not shout at them, as this could make them feel sad and/or scared in school. One young person said that a teacher being mean or rude to them would cause them to feel annoyed. This study therefore reveals that not only are adults themselves important to CYP at risk of PEX, but the qualities they have are equally important, and therefore adults should be conscious as to how they are being received by the CYP they are supporting.

Having the opportunity to be able to learn in school was important to some of the young people interviewed. They expressed feeling happy in school when they are learning. Learning appeared to be what some of these young people wanted to do in school and they felt one of the best things in school was having the opportunity to learn new things. They also described school as being a negative experience when they were unable to learn. It was also important to these young people that learning was enjoyable, and they were able to have fun in lessons. Trotman (2015) found that Secondary pupils valued the quality of lessons and enjoyed them when they were interactive and fun, and what the current study has done is suggest that the quality of learning is also equally important to Primary age pupils who are at risk of PEX and they do not value learning opportunities any less than their non 'at risk' peers.

Many of the young people in this study highlighted the importance of feeling safe in school. Maslow's (1943) 'Hierarchy of Needs' identifies safety as one of the key ingredients needed for self-actualisation, and therefore safety is a significant factor for normal healthy development. In Maxwell's (2006) study he also identified safety in school as one of the themes that emerged from his data when he interviewed Primary age pupils with SEN about their experience of school. The current study therefore has also highlighted the importance young people at risk of PEX place on feeling safe in school.

Young people in the current study talked about wanting their school to have a positive ethos and wanting it to be a kind and friendly place. They felt it was important people felt happy and calm in school and therefore they want their school to reflect a positive ethos. The importance of school ethos, and in particular, a school culture that strives to celebrate positive behaviour was highlighted by Hatton (2013) as being significant in supporting inclusion and reducing school exclusion rates. Therefore, this study further signifies a need to consider the school ethos and provide a school environment that is both positive and nurtures the needs of young people to better support their inclusion and in doing so reduce their risk of exclusion (Hatton, 2013; Solomon and Thompson, 2013).

CYP who are at risk of permanent school exclusion appear to experience injustice in school. What has emerged from the data is the importance these young people place on wanting to be treated fairly and feel valued in school. This supports findings from the literature, like those found in Cefai and Cooper (2010) who found that students showed concern about the perceived unfair treatment they experienced from their teachers and peers. This study has found that often these young people do not feel they have been treated fairly, and hence can experience injustice. It therefore feels important these young people are treated in school in a way they are able to understand as being fair in the school context.

5.3.5 How do young people identified as being at risk of PEX feel in school?

Although the literature has revealed that some young people who have SEBD in school can experience feelings of frustration, sadness and anger as a result of feeling that they have been treated unfairly at school, I feel that the literature to date has been limited in identifying how children who are vulnerable and AROSE actually

feel when they are in school. The current study has revealed that these young people who have been identified as being at risk of PEX are experiencing a wealth of feelings, some positive and some negative.

For example, the young people interviewed spoke about experiencing feelings of happiness in school when they are playing with their friends, and they expressed that it was important that people were able to feel happy and calm in school. These young people can also experience feelings such as sadness and anger as a result of teachers shouting or getting told off. They also talked about feeling annoyed and angry when they think they have been misunderstood and treated unfairly. One young person in the study talked about sometimes feeling scared and upset in school and can worry about going to school. Another young person said that they feel 'all the feelings' in school.

These findings suggest that how young people feel in school is not simple. Young people who are at risk of school exclusion can experience both positive and negative feelings in school as a result of their different experiences. This is relevant as it allows us to understand that feelings experienced in school are likely to be unique to each young person identified as being at AROSE. These findings contribute to a clearer understanding of some of the factors that may be influential upon the different feelings these young people experience in school.

5.4 Issues to consider

5.4.1 Methodological considerations

It feels important to consider here the notion that the young people who participated in this study were not all aware they were at risk of PEX. This was a key methodological consideration of mine that young people who participated in the study did not need to be aware that they were at risk of PEX to take part. I will now consider why this decision was made and the implications this had upon the research interviews and findings.

The aims of the study were to better understand the school experiences of a population of young people who had been identified as being at risk of PEX. Previous research amongst the literature has chosen to focus on the process of school exclusion and how young people who had been excluded from school felt about their exclusion. Considering the focus of previous research and wanting to address a gap in the literature I decided therefore to focus my research aims on how young people

who are at risk of PEX experience and talk about their school in general terms. I was keen to identify what the barriers were for them in school, what helps or could help them, what is important to them and how they feel in school. Therefore, it did not feel necessary that these young people were aware that they were at risk of PEX. I also did not want a focus on school exclusion to detract from their conversations about the wider aspects of school.

The concept of school exclusion is also a difficult concept for young people in the Primary phase to understand, and often schools make the conscious decision not to make these young people aware when they are AROSE. Therefore, I felt that many young people of this age may not know about their school exclusion. As part of the ethical considerations of my research it was important that participants remained safe, both physically and psychologically at all times. I therefore did not want these children to be put at any psychological harm by needing to be told about their being at risk of PEX, particularly as it did not feel a necessary requirement in meeting the proposed research aims.

The interviews therefore focused on the school experience alone and not the process or nature of school exclusion. This therefore meant that throughout the interviews we did not get an understanding of how these young people feel about school exclusion, or of the reasons they feel they might be AROSE. As participants were not necessarily aware that they were at risk of PEX this also required a sense of consciousness from myself as the researcher to protect this information from participants.

My decision not to focus the interview on the process or experience of school exclusion likely had an impact on the findings of the research. Due to the focus of the interview's, participants may have been more likely to focus on positive elements and present an idealised view of their school during interviews, whereas discussions based on the topic of exclusion may have led participants to talk more about such factors relating specifically to their behaviour and experience of exclusion. However, I do not feel that this detracted from addressing the proposed research aims, but this decision and associated implications might want to be further considered when planning future research.

5.4.2 Dissemination of findings

Research hopes to help improve systems, practice, individuals and make contributions to knowledge. However, for this to happen research findings need to be disseminated to the relevant people for any change to occur. The dissemination of research findings is imperative for the development of evidence-based practice and to influence positive outcomes, by expanding knowledge and challenging or supporting pre-existing ideas. It is also often felt that for research findings to become embedded within practice, the findings need to become part of a wider national agenda, which governs educational practices.

There are many challenges when considering the dissemination of research findings, and I shall now consider the challenges in relation to this specific research.

The first challenge that presents when trying to disseminate research findings is the notion of trying to access an appropriate and relevant audience. This can present as a challenge as it can often be difficult to gain access to a relevant audience for the findings of such research to be considered. As part of disseminating the findings of this research it will be necessary to communicate the findings to local primary schools to make them aware of the research and how the findings could benefit their practice. The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) will also be an important resource, as Educational Psychologists (EPs) are well placed to use evidence-based practice within their work, and have a pertinent role in supporting the inclusion of vulnerable young people.

It is however important to consider when communicating research findings, that you may need to challenge existing views or preconceived ideas that exist within a target audience. With regards to this research, this means challenging people's views on and the use of school exclusions. From the literature already addressed in chapter 2 we have discussed the notion that school exclusions are often relied upon and schools continue to use exclusions as they believe they are necessary to achieve positive inclusivity for the wider school community (Hatton, 2013; DfE, 2019).

It may be a challenge to help professionals understand that there may be other ways to support young people, without having to exclude them. This may not be easy, when some educational professionals feel that it is easier and more cost effective to exclude a pupil, than implement the necessary support to work to prevent school

exclusion. Therefore, for findings of this study to be of value, professionals need to first recognise the need to reduce school exclusion rates and to recognise that change is needed. This again can be a challenge in an education system where there can be such variation in values and beliefs.

The findings of such research like the current study may also be met with some resistance from professionals due to the idea that schools feel they will need sufficient resource to be able to support these young people effectively. The findings presented have found that these young people who have been identified as being 'at risk' of school exclusion want to access normal school experiences as their peers, however they can experience several difficulties which may act as barriers to them in school. Therefore, these young people will need to be sufficiently supported to enable them to overcome such difficulties to allow them to experience school positively.

The findings from this study may appear simple; however, they are also somewhat complex. This is because although these young people identified AROSE want normal school experiences, they can also encounter significant difficulties in school meaning they cannot participate in the normal school experiences as they desire. The findings of this study tell us we need to support these young people to be able to achieve the sense of normalcy they have talked about during their interviews. This can contradict many of our assumptions that young people who are at risk of school exclusion likely view school differently and do not strive for the same opportunities as their non at risk peers, for example to socialise and to learn. Therefore, rather than limiting these experiences, we need to ensure these young people are being supported to overcome any presenting difficulties so they can achieve a sense of normality in school. Enabling other educational professionals to challenge their pre-existing assumptions may itself be a challenge.

EP's are particularly familiar with the challenges of disseminating research or evidence-based findings in their practice and have developed a range of models and frameworks to support the application of findings across audiences. Examples of these are 'Implementation Science' (Kelly, 2016) and 'consultation' (Wagner, 2016) which are evidence-based frameworks to be considered and used to support required change when disseminating findings across professions and contexts.

5.4.3 Models and frameworks to consider

Despite these young people placing significant value on social belonging, particularly their friendships and social opportunities, they are at high risk of experiencing negative relationships and social difficulties, which compromise their school experience (Banks et al., 2010). Therefore, when helping these young people, attention should be paid to their sense of social belonging, and they should be adequately supported to enable them to experience positive social opportunities. The role of adults is also significant upon their social belonging. How a young person experiences school and difficult relationships between a teacher and a young person are commonly linked in the literature to poor behaviour and school exclusions (Pomeroy, 1999), and this study has used pupil voice to echo this. School ethos and how a young person experiences school seems important when we consider why a young person is AROSE (Benson, 1996, Wright et al. 2000 as cited in Macrae et al., 2003). Specifically, this research study suggests that safety, learning and a positive ethos are factors particularly important to Primary age pupils at risk of PEX. Schools therefore, need to have a better understanding of the difficulties that make these young people vulnerable, to better facilitate school inclusion (Hatton, 2013).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The literature consulted has indicated, and this study further highlights the relevance in referring to Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' specifically when supporting CYP AROSE. We should also be using this framework in schools to ensure that all children and young people's needs are being met, which will likely reduce the risk of these young people becoming at risk of school exclusion.

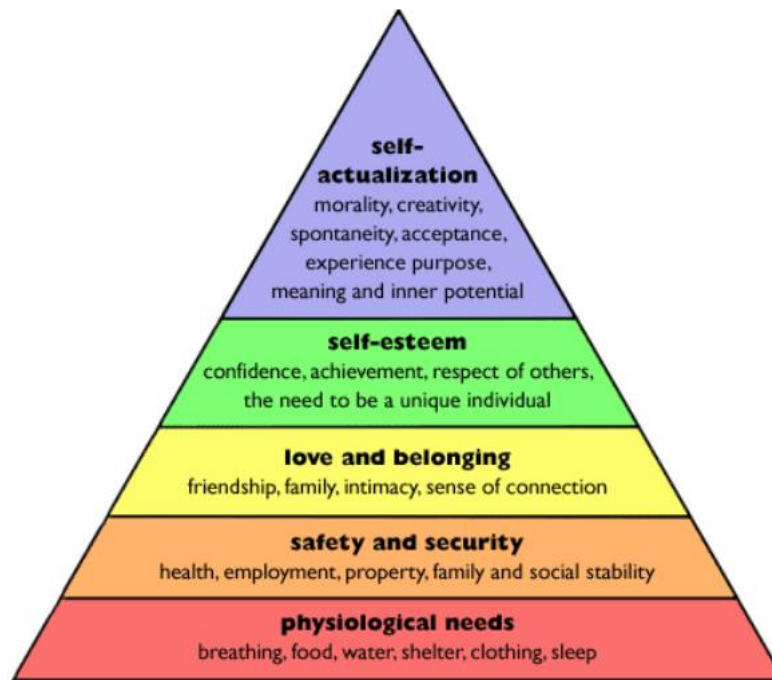


Figure 6: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow and Lewis (1987))

The CYP in the current study referred to many aspects represented within Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) when considering how these young people want to experience school; social belonging and safety, and what might act as barriers for them in school; troubled sleep and relationships. It therefore feels significant to consider this as a useful framework when supporting all children to allow them to realise their full potential in school.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

The findings from this study and the literature consulted also imply that exclusion from school likely happens as a result of several different contributing factors (Paget et al., 2018). Therefore, we likely need to pay attention to risk factors present in other systems around the child both within the school environment, the home context and wider education systems (Pereira and Lavoie, 2018). As suggested by Bronfenbrenner (1994), it is important to be more aware of the different contexts in which behaviour occurs (Pritchett et al., 2014), and the wider influences on child development. Bronfenbrenner's established framework will be useful when considering the influences upon child development and how best to support CYP AROSE.

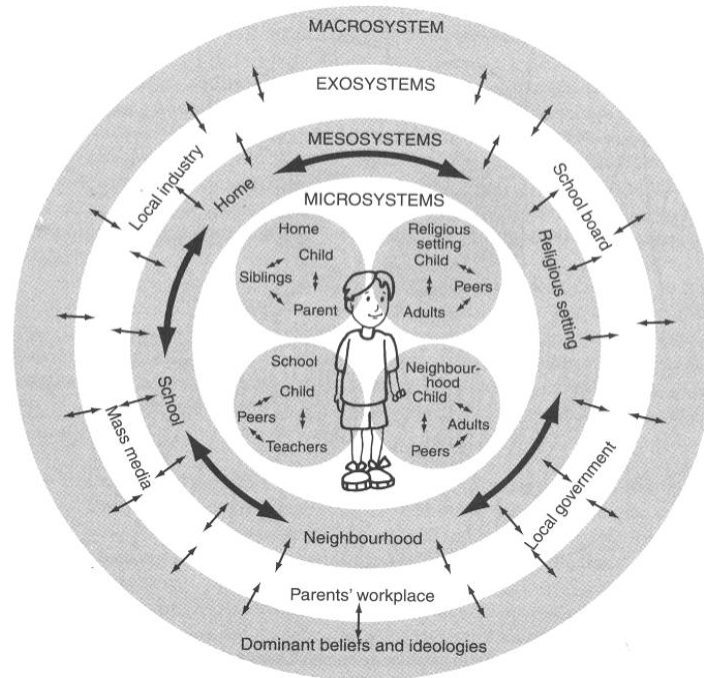


Figure 7: Bronfenbrenner Ecological systems theory (Harkonen, 2001)

A targeted intervention model

From the findings discussed a model has been established; 'A targeted intervention model for consideration with children AROSE', for use when supporting children who have been identified as being AROSE, either PEX or FEX, to help support their inclusion in school. This model will be looked at in detail within section 6.2, when considering this study's contribution to knowledge.

A final thought for consideration is that despite a recognition of some shared meaning across the data, it is still important to reflect, as indicated throughout this study, that each young person who is identified to be AROSE's experiences at school, are likely to be individual and unique and the implementation of intervention and support should reflect this.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter will consider this study's contribution to knowledge and its implications for EP practice. I will also use this chapter to reflect upon this study's strengths and limitations. I will then provide a reflexive account and will end with a chapter summary and my concluding comments on the study and its outcomes.

6.2 Contribution to knowledge

School exclusion rates, both permanent and fixed term, have been recorded to rise since 2013/14 and there is increasing government interest in school exclusion rates, and consideration as to what can be done to initiate their decline. This research hoped to make a positive contribution to the current literature on school exclusions. To me this is an issue that is extremely significant in today's climate given that some of the UK's most vulnerable CYP are facing exclusion from school, and all CYP, regardless of circumstance deserve a high-quality education (DfE, 2019).

When considering the literature, we have been alluded to several studies that share the views of a population of CYP who have already been excluded from school or those with additional needs who are more likely to experience a school exclusion. However, there has often been a failure to listen to the voices of CYP who have specifically been labelled as being AROSE (Children Commissioner, 2012). Therefore, to develop an understanding of the behaviours exhibited by children who are identified as being AROSE, we need to start to listen to their voices to better enable us to comprehend why behaviour may be occurring (Hardman, 2001).

Research studies like that of Trotman et al. (2015) and Caslin (2019) have previously shown that the voices of CYP can be both beneficial and useful when trying to understand contexts that specifically involve them. Similarly, this study has found that it is possible to use the voices of CYP identified as being at risk of PEX to inform us as to how they experience or want to experience school. Therefore, this study can further add to the current literature to confirm that CYP's voices can be a valuable resource when trying to better meet their needs and develop better systems to support them, and although not straightforward, this study gives us some insights as to how this might be done effectively.

This research study also specifically addresses the gap in the literature, by working with a distinct group of CYP who are considered at risk of PEX. Despite a developing evidence base for the consideration of pupil voice in research for children within the Secondary phase of school, pupil voice in research within the Primary phase has not been developing at such a rate. Therefore, this research has given CYP from the Primary phase, who are at risk of PEX, a voice within the literature on school exclusion. This has allowed us to develop our knowledge on the factors that may act as barriers and that may help these CYP in school, what is important to them in school and consequently has given us an insight in to how they might feel in school.

A distinct finding from this study is the notion that CYP who are identified as being AROSE likely want and strive for normal experiences in school. These young people implied that the things important and helpful to them in school are not so different from those of their non at risk peers. As previously discussed, this finding may appear simple, yet complex, given that these young people often appear to push against normal rules and boundaries in school. These young people have also identified several barriers in school, which likely compromise their 'normal' school experiences. Some of these are due to individual difficulties, but also some barriers are as result of interventions put in place to try and support these young people. These findings may therefore present as challenging when disseminating to professionals, as this can contradict many people's assumptions that CYP who are AROSE likely view school differently and do not strive for the same opportunities as their non at risk peers. This notion of 'normalcy' may also feel too simplistic to professionals when understanding how to support this population of young people because ultimately, they are not so distinct from their peers, yet we often put systems in place that go against this and treat them as a discrete population. This only further impacts upon their sense of 'normalcy' and this is how they become to experience injustice, when they feel that they are not being treated fairly.

This study does support previous findings from the literature that states that there are several factors that likely cause a young person to be AROSE and recognise that contributing factors are likely complex (Paget et al., 2018; Robinson, 1998). This study further recognises the importance of relationships, environmental contexts, and external factors (Pomeroy, 1999; Wright et al., 2000; Benson, 1996 and Banks et al., 2010 as cited in Macrae, 2003; Timpson, 2019). This study also highlights how

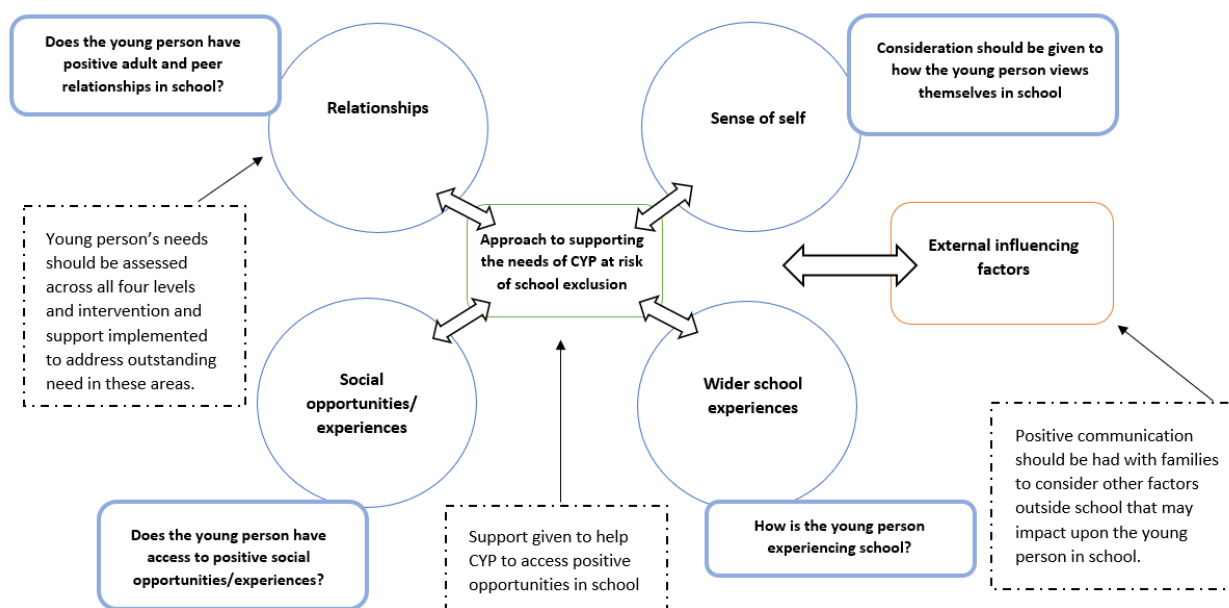
important it is that we consider how CYP perceive themselves and feel about themselves in school. The findings also challenge the preconceived idea that school exclusions occur solely as a result of within child factors, and therefore address the need to consider the issue of school exclusion across the wider context.

Some potentially important areas to consider when supporting CYP who have been identified as being AROSE have been highlighted in this study. From these findings a model has been established for use when supporting CYP who have been identified as being AROSE, either PEX or FEX, to help support their inclusion in school.

A full representation of the model titled 'A targeted intervention model for consideration with children AROSE' can also be found in Appendix 17.

This model is intended to be used both implicitly by education professionals to inform and guide thinking when considering the needs of CYP who are AROSE, but also explicitly when implementing targeted interventions to support CYP. The model can be used by education professionals when CYP of Primary school age have been identified as being AROSE, either PEX or FEX. The model has been developed using the nuanced idea that young people AROSE want normal experiences in school, but that they can often experience difficulties that can contradict this. The first part of the model is intended to guide professionals thinking, taking into consideration all the identified areas that may be having an impact upon CYP's behaviour in school. The second part of the model explicitly outlines questions that can be asked to ensure that the CYP have their needs met and/or are receiving the necessary support and intervention within in each of these identified areas. Ultimately the model is intended to help education professionals to better understand the school experiences of CYP who are AROSE, and consider where support is needed, to reduce their likelihood of being excluded from school.

A targeted intervention model for consideration with children at risk of school exclusion (part one)



A targeted intervention model for consideration with children at risk of school exclusion (part two)

(Questions for consideration)

CYP identified as being at risk of school exclusion need support to enable them to access normalcy in school. Considerations should be given across the four areas to overcome any difficulties these young people are experiencing and to help them engage in positive school experiences.

Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does this young person have positive peer relationships? Is the young person experiencing positive adult relationships? Are they valued and treated fairly? What further support needs to be given to enhance the pupil/teacher relationships? 	Sense of self <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the young person feel in school? What might be contributing towards this? How are their feelings impacting on their school experience? What support/opportunities might this young person need?
Social opportunities/experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the young person have access to positive social experiences? Are they achieving a sense of belonging in school? What further support needs to be given to ensure this young person has access to positive social experiences and experience social belonging? 	School experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the young person experience school? What contributes towards this; ethos, learning needs, safety, environment? How might their school experience be acting as a barrier to them in school? What support could be considered to enhance their school experience?
External influencing factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are professionals aware of any contributing factors outside of school? What is the quality of home/school communication? How can we minimise risk factors outside of school? What additional support needs to be accessed to achieve this? 	

Figure 8: A targeted intervention model for consideration with children AROSE

6.3 Implications for Educational Psychology

The role of EPS in England has continued to grow since the introduction of the 1981 and 1993 Education Acts (Fallon et al., 2010). EPs use assessment, intervention, research and training across individual, organisational and systemic contexts (Fallon et al., 2010). Ultimately EPs have a key role in better understanding how people learn and develop, and in working to ensure best possible outcomes are achieved for CYP. In doing so EPs have a unique contribution in supporting the inclusion of CYP so that they have access to the best possible learning opportunities (Hardman and Worthington, 2000). EPs have a good understanding of educational systems and their contexts, and their knowledge, advice and support are all highly valued across the education profession (DfEE, 2000). This makes EPs extremely well placed in the topic of school exclusion. The findings from the current study will further add to the knowledge base of school exclusions within England, which will help inform the practice of not only EPs, but also the wider education profession and interrelated services as part a wider agenda to support early intervention and inclusion.

EPs are well placed to use the findings from this study to inform their individual assessment work with CYP, as one way they can support inclusion is by promoting the use of pupil voice within their work and allowing CYP the opportunity to be heard (Woods and Farrell, 2006; Messiou, 2002). What this study does is provide evidence that CYP who are at risk of PEX and who are in the Primary phase can give valuable opinions about their school experiences and can illuminate factors related to their experience of school and constructs of their world. EPs can also use their psychological foundations to guide their practice, in order to try and better understand the motivations that lie behind behaviour which might be putting children AROSE, whether this be done at an individual, group or systemic level of intervention.

EPs are also well placed to use the findings of this study to better inform the adults supporting CYP and their families, most likely achieved through consultative discussions, where the study's findings can be used to help facilitate discussion and identify possible intervention. Many EPSs are now using consultative models of practice within their daily work with service users. Consultation as a positive EP tool has been well documented across many DfE documents and allows issues to be considered within a collaborative context (Nolan and Moreland, 2014). Working in

this way to support children who are AROSE feels extremely relevant if we consider the need to address the issue of school exclusion as one that goes beyond within child factors. Consultation allows for successful early intervention, with psychological foundations embedded within a problem-solving framework (Nolan and Moreland, 2014).

EPs also have a continued responsibility to ensure that research continues to help inform policy and practice at both a local and national level (Cameron, 2006).

Therefore, knowledge of this research and its associative findings can be used to apprise future ways of working to better meet the needs of children AROSE, without the need of removing them from mainstream education, and in part increasing their educational opportunities.

6.4 Strengths and limitations

6.4.1 Strengths of the research

It is important to recognise some of the strengths of the current research study. In particular I will speak about the strengths of the study in relation to its qualitative research design. I have made references previously during this study to the importance of listening to pupil voice (Hopkins, 2008) and the literature discussed earlier in chapter 2 also highlights that young people can be reliable informants on issues that directly concern them. Qualitative research methods used in this study have allowed for pupil voice to be sought, and has therefore allowed for CYP who are at risk of PEX to express opinions and feelings about how they experience school, and has shown that pupils who may be viewed as vulnerable due to age and level of need should be included in research that directly impacts them.

I specifically chose to use IPA as my methodology within this study as it enables the exploration of how people engage in and experience their immediate world (Smiths, Flowers and Larkin, 2009), and pays attention to their individual and unique perspective (Smith and Osborn, 2007). This has allowed for a thorough exploration of the school experiences of CYP who are at risk of PEX. The method of semi-structured interviews, with the use of facilitative tools supported children in being able to talk about their experiences and express themselves in a comfortable way.

When discussing previous research, it became clear that a lot of the existing literature has focussed on gathering the views of children who have already experienced an exclusion from school and of those from the Secondary phase, which

includes children over the age of eleven years. There is emerging literature within the Primary phase that has elicited the views of vulnerable groups of children, such as those with SEMH/EBD and additional needs, but this study has been able to gather the views of a population of young people who have specifically been identified as being 'at risk' of PEX. Therefore, a strength of this study is the contribution that it makes to current knowledge. This study has also produced a 'targeted intervention model for consideration with children AROSE', and provides schools and professionals working with young people who are considered to be AROSE with a useful model to guide their thinking and plan for intervention to try and reduce school exclusion rates.

6.4.2 Limitations of the research

This research study was completed as part of an Educational Psychology Doctorate, and therefore was a timebound piece of work. What this did was provide some restrictions on the nature of this piece of research, for example, the inability to conduct a longitudinal piece of research exploring the school experiences of CYP over an extended period of time, allowing for insights in to how the school experiences of CYP AROSE may or may not evolve over time.

The research took place across three educational settings within one UK LA. The nature of participant recruitment also meant that all participants were white British males. This means that findings cannot be generalised across wider populations. It is important to note however that to generalise findings was not the intention of this research and instead this study hoped to provide individual insights in to how CYP AROSE experience school.

It is important to recognise the nature of subjectivity throughout this research. Firstly, this applies to the subjectivity of the definition of 'at risk' and how the criteria provided for participant recruitment still allowed for some interpretation by recruiting schools. Secondly, IPA studies rely on the subjective interpretations of the data collected by the researcher. However, to ensure trustworthiness and transparency during data analysis I used a six-step framework as outlined by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) (see Chapter 3.11). I also used direct quotes when presenting findings to ensure that the voices of participants were explicit.

Another significant limitation of this study relates to the participants limited ability to talk at length about their school experiences. Given the participants ages and their

potential difficulties related to their additional needs, this meant that the volume of data collected could be viewed as limited in line with IPA's criteria. This places some compromise on the quality of the findings, as they are drawn from smaller quantities of data than would be hoped for. However, the findings drawn from this study are still relevant and useful and provide a basis on which to build future research.

6.5 Future research

Drawing upon the strengths and limitations that have been considered in relation to the current research study, I will now look at possible directions for future research.

- I see the benefits of further research in this area to build on our knowledge of how CYP who are considered at risk of PEX experience school, to allow us to further consider targeted interventions to reduce school exclusion rates. Further findings will also add to the validity of the current research study and will further confirm the role that young people who are at risk of PEX have in sharing their views to inform intervention.
- The literature would benefit from a longitudinal study with a focus on response to intervention over time to see how CYP's experiences of school might change as a result of targeted intervention at different data collection points. Data could be collected to see if listening to the views of these CYP correlates to a minimisation in their risk of being excluded.
- Given that this study was conducted using six participants, all of which were white British males, it would be beneficial for future research to be conducted across a wider population, in particular across a female population. However, given that males are more highly represented within exclusion statistics, there may be difficulties in accessing a female population considered at risk of PEX for such research.

6.6 Critical reflections

Unsurprisingly, I came up against some challenges when recruiting participants, likely influenced by the vulnerability of the research population and the sensitivity of the topic of school exclusion (Please see Appendix 18 for further reflections on the recruitment process). However, the schools that did take part in the research were supportive of the research process and saw the value in the research.

Overall, I feel that the young people engaged well in the interview process. Additional opportunities for rapport building may have contributed to the collection of slightly richer data, however I feel that the creative methods used during interviews were beneficial in allowing the young people to express their opinions in a more interactive way. Despite the young people engaging well within the interviews, given their age and possible difficulties related to their additional needs, this meant that some of the young people's answers and discussions throughout the interviews could be brief, and often they required additional prompts from the researcher throughout their interviews. This means that often quotes from the transcripts were not as substantial as would be hoped for when using IPA as a method of data analysis. IPA's need for substantial data presents as a possible limitation of IPA as a methodology, particularly when working with children or vulnerable groups, as discussed in detail in section 3.7.4, where the notion that IPA requires reflexive articulate qualities from its participants was considered.

Therefore, this meant that some challenges presented when analysing the data, as sometimes findings were drawn from smaller quantities of data, and may compromise the trustworthiness of the findings. However, to support trustworthiness of the data I have ensured transparent reporting of methods of data collection and data analysis and have worked to ensure an accurate interpretation of the data, (Shenton, 2004). Despite these considerations I feel it is important to recognise the value of these young people's voices and despite quotes often not being of great length, we must still recognise the worth of what these young people have shared about their school experiences and the findings we can take away from the study. Overall, I am pleased with the data collected and feel that considering the vulnerability of the population, the data collected was thorough enough to answer my research questions.

It might be important when conducting future research to give further considerations during participant recruitment and to criteria needed for such research, ensuring that participants satisfy requirements for the chosen methodology. Or further work could be done to support these young people to be able to contribute fuller accounts during their interviews. I feel that the creative methods used during interviews did support the young people to an extent, but feel that the young people might have benefited

from more sessions to develop their confidence in sharing their accounts of school and to open up more about their experiences.

6.6 Reflexive account

I have thoroughly enjoyed completing this piece of research and have particularly valued having the opportunity to give CYP the opportunity to talk about their school, to better understand their school experiences. My research topic was initially influenced by my own beliefs that children have a right to education, and the value I place on listening to pupil voice, has also been highly influential upon the person-centred approach to my research design.

From an early stage in the planning of my research, I knew that I wanted to focus my research study on the topic of school exclusions but needed to consider my specific research focus. Pupil voice aligns with the values I hold within my work as a TEP, and therefore I intended to incorporate pupil voice within my research study. I therefore wanted to use this research study to establish an understanding of how young people who are AROSE experience school, and to see if this information could be useful in informing practice to promote inclusion.

This research study has focused on the school experiences of children who are at risk of PEX. From the outset it was important that I defined participation criteria that would distinguish my research population. Initially I considered establishing inclusion criteria based upon the number of FEXs a young person had already experienced from school and use this measure to define if a child was at risk of PEX. However, following further consideration and reflection I felt that each school would likely use FEXs differently and would have differing behaviour policies within their school, which meant that a young person who received a high number of FEXs from one school, may not have experienced the same number from another school. I therefore established inclusion criteria that I felt would allow me to recruit young people who would likely be considered at risk of PEX. See chapter 3 for full exclusion criteria. I felt content that these established criteria would allow me to recruit a purposeful sample for my research study.

Recognising my role during data collection and possible researcher subjectivity has also been significant. It was important that I remained aware and reflective of my own presence within the interview, ensuring I remained impartial throughout. It has also been important for me to acknowledge and be reflective of the methods and

questioning used during data collection and how they could guide participant answers in someone way, causing possible bias to the nature of data collected.

Throughout this study it was particularly important for me to be mindful of my preconceived views of child behaviour in school and my belief that school ecology and other systemic factors can be influential upon child behaviour. However, by explicitly recognising that I had these beliefs it allowed me to reflect upon this throughout data collection and data analysis to ensure that my interpretations were true reflections of the participants views and that I was not making false interpretations based on my own beliefs.

6.7 Personal reflections

A reflection of mine having completed this piece of research has been the value in listening to this group of young people and giving them the opportunity to speak to me about their school experiences. Each young person appeared to value the opportunity to talk with me about their school and to me this made the whole research process invaluable. Conducting this piece of research has also proven the significance of listening to young people talk about their school and has shown that hearing their views can help to inform future practice and intervention. The topic of school inclusion is one that has been and remains a passion of mine and is something that I will continue to value in my work as an EP.

The research process itself has at times been demanding and sometimes overwhelming, both emotionally and academically. However, the competing demands that I have faced throughout this research study have allowed me to develop my skills in self-reflection, justification, prioritising workload, working under pressure and to deadlines and I feel have supported me in developing my resilience as both a researcher and practitioner. I feel that all of these skills will be essential to take with me and further build upon during my future career as an EP and of course in any future research I may have the opportunity to undertake.

6.7 Chapter summary and concluding comments

This chapter has provided a reflection on the contribution to knowledge this study provides and the implications of this study upon EPs and EP practice. Within this chapter I have also reflected upon both the strengths and limitations of this study and directions for any future research. I have then provided some critical reflection and a reflexive account.

This study set out to better understand the school experiences of a population of young people, age 7 to 11 years, who had been identified by their school as being at risk of PEX. The study hoped to address a gap in the literature which specifically used the voices of young people identified as being at risk of PEX, to better inform future practice to ensure better outcomes for CYP. The findings from this study not only build on findings from previous literature that pupil voice can be a useful resource when trying to better understand a given phenomenon, but also the findings from this study suggest that school exclusion is likely impacted by several contributing and complex factors.

This study has given us a better understanding as to how young people identified as being at risk of PEX in the Primary phase talk about and experience school. The findings from this study imply that CYP who are at risk of PEX want normal experiences in school. However, they can also experience several difficulties in school, meaning they cannot participate in normal school experiences as they would hope. Also, the systems put in place can often further compromise their access to these normal school experiences. This can cause them to experience feelings of injustice which further influences how they are experiencing school and is likely placing them at increased risk of school exclusion than their peers.

The study has also specifically identified some of the barriers these young people face in school; social difficulties, difficulties with learning, negative relationships with adults, experience of injustice and external factors. It has enabled us to better understand what can help these young people, such as; adults, peers and positive relationships. The study has identified what is important to these young people; friendships, social opportunities (play), adults, personality attributes, learning, safety, school ethos and being treated fairly. We also know these young people can experience both positive and negative feelings in school dependent on many differing experiences.

This study has also provided a model; 'a targeted intervention model for consideration with children AROSE', which may support schools and other education professionals such as EPs, when considering intervention to support children considered to be AROSE. Therefore, this research not only has implications as to how we may view school exclusions from here on, but also how we choose to work to reduce them in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Systematic literature search

Search terms for literature review

Literature search completed March 2018 and June 2018

**Each search carried out was filtered by year and most articles selected were published 2005 onwards.
This search was limited to within the UK*

Search terms for literature review

Literature search completed March 2018 and June 2018

**Each search carried out was filtered by year and most articles selected were published 2005 onwards.
This search was limited to within the UK*

Search term used	Database used				
	PSYCHINFO	BEI (British Education Index)	ERIC	Education Abstracts	Teacher Reference Centre
School exclusion OR excluded OR permanent exclusion OR fixed term exclusion	112	195	247	250	144
Articles found refined through title search					
	40 relevant				24 relevant
Further refinement by combining search terms					
Primary educat* OR Primary school OR Infant school OR Junior school	9	29	33	24	5
Literature refined by reading articles using the inclusion/exclusion criteria to judge their relevance					
	9 exported	15 exported	8 exported	15 exported	0 exported

	PSYCHINFO	BEI (British Education Index)	ERIC	Education Abstracts	Teacher Reference Centre
Primary educat* OR Primary school OR Infant school OR Junior school	11,508		26,409	12,282	13,134
Refinement of the literature by combining search terms					
School exclusion OR permanent exclusion OR fixed term exclusion	13	22	33	16	16
Literature refined by reading articles using the inclusion/exclusion criteria to judge their relevance					
		10 exported	9 exported	9 exported	8 exported

Search term used	Database used				
	PSYCHINFO	BEI (British Education Index)	ERIC	Education Abstracts	Teacher Reference Centre

Primary educat* OR Primary school OR Infant school OR Junior school	11,488	9,235	26,409	12,279	13,134
Refinement of the literature by combining search terms					
Primary children OR primary pupils OR primary students	216	5,189	3,544	5,140	6,060
Further refinement by combining additional search terms					
Behaviour* OR social OR emotion*	55	1,697	1,026	1,875	1,439
Further refinement by combining additional search terms					
At risk	3	92	83	177	68
Literature refined by article titles using the inclusion/exclusion criteria to judge their relevance					
	0 exported	3 exported	4 exported	11 exported	4 exported

Search term used	Database used				
	PSYCHINFO	BEI (British Education Index)	ERIC	Education Abstracts	Teacher Reference Centre
Primary educat* OR Primary school OR Infant school OR Junior school	11,508	9,185	26,409	12,282	13,134
Refinement of the literature by combining search terms					
Pupil OR student OR child OR children	10,081	7,922	23,340	10,219	10,885
Further refinement by combining additional search terms					
Voice OR view OR story OR experience	1,326	1,973	6,115	2,097	1,900
Further refinement by combining additional search terms					
Behaviour* OR disaffection OR exclusion OR excluded	94	208	846	247	145
Article titles checked for relevance					
	8 exported	16 exported	26 exported	14 exported	18 exported

Literature search completed March 2018 and June 2018

**Each search carried out was filtered by year and most articles selected were published between 1990 and 2004. This search was limited to within the UK.*

Search term used	Database used				
	PSYCHINFO	BEI (British Education Index)	ERIC	Education Abstracts	Teacher Reference Centre
School exclusion OR excluded OR permanent exclusion OR fixed term exclusion	15,192	108	731	796	529
Refinement of the literature by combining search terms					
Primary educat* OR Primary school OR Infant school OR Junior school	57	9	55	18	58
Literature refined by reading articles using the inclusion/exclusion criteria to judge their relevance					
	10 exported	7 exported	12 exported	4 exported	12 exported

	PSYCHINFO	BEI (British Education Index)	ERIC	Education Abstracts	Teacher Reference Centre
Primary educat* OR Primary school OR Infant school OR Junior school	11,418	1,800	20,810	8,436	11,954
<i>Refinement of the literature by combining search terms</i>					
School exclusion OR permanent exclusion OR fixed term exclusion	57	7	55	18	58
<i>Literature refined by reading articles using the inclusion/exclusion criteria to judge their relevance</i>					
	10 exported	7 exported	12 exported	4 exported	12 exported

Search term used	Database used				
	PSYCHINFO	BEI (British Education Index)	ERIC	Education Abstracts	Teacher Reference Centre
Primary educat* OR Primary school OR Infant school OR Junior school	11,418	1,813	20,810	8,436	11,954
<i>Refinement of the literature by combining search terms</i>					
Primary children OR primary pupils OR primary students	0	259	1,679	2,180	5,160
<i>Further refinement by combining additional search terms</i>					
Behaviour* OR social OR emotion*	0	41	405	638	346
		13 exported based on article titles			
<i>Further refinement by combining additional search terms</i>					
At risk			36	70	17
<i>Literature refined by article titles using the inclusion/exclusion criteria to judge their relevance</i>					
	0 exported		11 exported	7 exported	9 exported

Journal Search

Search term used	Educational Psychology in Practice Journal
Experiences of excluded children	338
<i>Literature refined through title search</i>	11 relevant
<i>Refined for duplicates</i>	0 exported
Pupil voice and EBD	164
<i>Literature refined through title search and duplication</i>	4 exported
Pupil voice and behaviour in school	352
<i>Literature refined through title search and duplication</i>	1 exported

Update systematic search September 2018, December 2018 and March 2019 to capture any new literature

	PSYCHINFO	BEI (British Education Index)	ERIC	Education Abstracts	Teacher Reference Centre
School exclusion OR permanent exclusion OR fixed term exclusion		209			
<i>Literature refined through title search</i>		32 relevant			
<i>Literature refined through duplication</i>		6 exported			

Appendix 2: Participant information sheet

Pupil Information Sheet

Dear

I am a student researcher and my name is Sophie



I would like to talk to you and do some activities about your

views of school



You will be able to stop our

conversation if you want to.

When we meet I will record our conversation



and may

write down some notes



If you agree to talk with me, I will keep what you say safe



and I will not use your name ~~NAME~~ unless you say something

that I think makes you unsafe and then I may need to share

what you have said.

I look forward to meeting you soon.



Sophie

NB: Approval has been granted by the School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee


Contact details:

Researcher: Sophie Loble; The University of Bristol
SL16307@bristol.ac.uk Tel. 07834 984127

Research supervisor 1; Dr Rob Green; The University of Bristol
mhxrq@bristol.ac.uk Tel. 01173310621

Appendix 3: Pupil consent form

Pupil Consent Form

Please tick if you agree	
I have read the information sheet given to me	
I am happy to talk about school with a researcher	
I understand that our conversation will be recorded	
I know that the things that I say will be kept safe	
I know that my name will not be used	
I understand that I will be allowed to stop our Conversation should I want to	

If you are happy to meet with the researcher to talk about school and have ticked all of the boxes above, please write your name in the box.

NAME

Thank You.

Sophie



Appendix 4: Parent letter

Parent Letter/ Information Sheet

Dear Parent/ Carer

I am currently in my second year of training on the Doctoral qualification for Educational Psychology at Bristol University and am currently on placement as a trainee Educational Psychologist within Swindon working for the Swindon Educational Psychology Service.

I am conducting a thesis that hopes to explore the school experiences of young people who are identified by their school as being at risk of permanent exclusion and would like to invite your school to take part in the research.

You are receiving this letter because your child has been selected by _____ school as a potential participant for this study. I would appreciate if you would take the time to read all of the information below regarding the study and your child's potential involvement.

Research aims and benefits

The research aims not only to give those young people a voice in a safe way, but also aims to see if pupil voice and the shared experiences of school may be a useful tool to help reduce school exclusions.

What will be expected of your child?

The pupil will be given a separate information sheet that explains the study. If they are happy to take part they will be asked to complete a consent form with adult guidance.

Pupils will be asked to meet with me on two occasions. The first occasion will be to introduce myself and for the pupil to ask me any questions that they might have. The second occasion will require the pupil to engage in a longer conversation with me, facilitated with some activities about school.

Will information collected be safe and confidential?

All data collected through the study will be anonymised; both names of the school and the pupil(s) will also be anonymised. All data collected will also be treated with confidentiality, however information disclosed relating to an illegal activity or that puts people at risk of harm may need to be shared. The sessions will be digitally recorded and some written notes will be taken. These recordings will be transcribed and analysed and will be stored securely on a password protected server.

Consent forms will be stored on a password protected server for 20 years.

Withdrawal from the study

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and both the school, pupils taking part and parents will have the right to withdraw from the study in line with researcher withdrawal procedures, which will involve the researcher providing a withdrawal time frame during which time participation can be withdrawn.

What do I do now?

Thank you for taking the time to read through this information. If you are happy for your child to take part in this study please can I ask that you complete the attached parent/ carer consent form and return it to the school at your nearest convenience.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below should you want to discuss this study further.

Contact details:

Researcher: Sophie Loble; The University of Bristol

SL16307@bristol.ac.uk

Tel. 07834 984127

Research supervisor 1; Dr Rob Green; The University of Bristol

mhxrg@bristol.ac.uk

Tel. 01173310621

Research supervisor 2; Dr John Franey; The University of Bristol

John.franey@bristol.ac.uk

Tel. 01173310619

Kind Regards

Sophie Loble

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 5: Parent consent form

Parent/ Carer Consent Form

Title of study

Researcher: Sophie Lobley, *University of Bristol*

Research supervisors: Dr Rob Green and Dr John Franey; University of Bristol

Declaration of consent;

Please tick the box for each statement and complete the details below.

- ☐ I confirm that I have read the information sheet provided regarding the above-named study and understand the information provided.
- ☐ I have been given the contact details for relevant people involved should I need to seek further information of clarity.
- ☐ I understand that I have the right to withdraw the pupil from the study, in line with the withdrawal procedures outlined by the researcher.
- ☐ I understand that the information obtained throughout the study will remain confidential. However, any information that compromises the safety of others will be passed on accordingly.
- ☐ I am aware that the session will be digitally recorded and written notes will be taken. These will be stored as outlined in the information sheet provided.
- ☐ I am happy for my child to take part in this research study.

Name:.....

Signed:.....

School:.....

Date:.....

Please return this completed consent form to sophie lobley at sl16307@bristol.ac.uk

Appendix 6: Letter to Head teacher

Letter to Head Teacher/ Information Sheet

Dear

I am currently in my second year of training on the Doctoral qualification for Educational Psychology at Bristol University and am currently on placement as a trainee Educational Psychologist within Swindon working for the Swindon Educational Psychology Service.

I am conducting a thesis that hopes to explore the school experiences of young people who are identified by their school as being at risk of permanent exclusion and would like to invite your school to take part in the research.

I would appreciate if you would take the time to read all of the information below regarding the study and your schools potential involvement.

Research aims and benefits

The research aims not only to give those young people a voice in a safe way, but also aims to see if pupil voice and the shared experiences of school may be a useful tool to help reduce school exclusions.

What you will need to do if you take part?

As the Head teacher I would ask that you liaised with key members of your staff to identify pupils who are currently AROSE and who you think would be a suitable participant to take part in the research.

Participation criteria;

- Pupils must be between 7 and 11 years of age.
- Pupils must have received a minimum of 5 fixed term exclusions or school equivalents sanction in the past academic year.
- Parents must be aware that this young person is at risk of permanent exclusion.

I would also ask that you could provide a safe space in which the pupil and I could meet; session 1 (30 mins) and session 2 (60 mins).

What will be expected of your pupil(s)?

Pupils will be asked to meet with me on two occasions. The first occasion will be to introduce myself and for the pupil to ask me any questions that they might have. The second occasion will require the pupil to engage in a longer conversation with me, facilitated with some activities about school.

Will information collected be safe and confidential?

All data collected through the study will be anonymised; both names of the school and the pupil(s) will also be anonymised. All data collected will also be treated with confidentiality, however information disclosed relating to an illegal activity or that puts people at risk of harm may need to be shared. The sessions will be digitally recorded and some written notes will be taken. These recordings will be transcribed and analysed and will be stored securely on a password protected server.

Consent forms will be stored on a password protected server for 20 years.

Withdrawal from the study

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and both the school and pupils taking part will have the right to withdraw from the study inline with researcher withdrawal procedures, which will involve the researcher providing a withdrawal time frame during which time participation can be withdrawn.

What do I do now?

Thank you for taking the time to read through this information. If you are happy to take part in this study please can I ask that you;

- Contact myself confirm your participation
- Complete the attached Head Teacher consent form
- Identify suitable pupils to take part
- Contact parent/ carers and gain parental consent (parent/ carer information sheet and consent form attached)
- Go through the attached pupil information sheet with the pupil(s) and ask them to complete the pupil consent form

Please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below should you want to discuss this study further.

Contact details:

Researcher: Sophie Loble; The University of Bristol

Sl16307@bristol.ac.uk

Tel. 07834 984127

Research supervisor 1; Dr Rob Green; The University of Bristol

mhxrq@bristol.ac.uk

Tel. 01173310621

Research supervisor 2; Dr John Franey; The University of Bristol

John.franey@bristol.ac.uk

Tel. 01173310619

Kind Regards

Sophie Loble

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 7: Head teacher consent form

Head Teacher Consent Form

Title of study

Researcher: Sophie Loble, *University of Bristol*

Research supervisors: Dr Rob Green and Dr John Franey; University of Bristol

Declaration of consent;

Please tick the box for each statement and complete the details below.

- ☐ I confirm that I have read the information sheet provided regarding the above-named study and understand the information provided.
- ☐ I have been given the contact details for relevant people involved should I need to seek further information of clarity.
- ☐ I understand that I have the right to withdraw any pupil from the study, in line with the withdrawal procedures outlined by the researcher.
- ☐ I understand that the information obtained throughout the study will remain confidential. However, any information that compromises the safety of others will be passed on accordingly.
- ☐ I am aware that the sessions with pupils will be digitally recorded and written notes will be taken. These will be stored as outlined in the information sheet provided.
- ☐ I am happy for my school and the selected pupils to be involved in this research study.

Name:.....

Signed:.....

School:.....

Date:.....

Please return this completed consent form to sophie loble at sl16307@bristol.ac.uk

Appendix 8: Participant profiles

Ben - is male and at the time of interview was 8 years old and was in year 3 at a mainstream primary school. Ben's main area of need was social emotional and mental health and communication. He has a diagnosis of ADHD. He is adopted and prior to being adopted spent a year of his early life in foster care. An application for a statutory assessment for an Education Health and Care Plan was being prepared at this time. Ben enjoys lunchtime and playing football.

Finn - is male and at time of interview was 7 years old and was in year 3 at a mainstream primary school. Finn has a diagnosis of ADHD and there are ongoing concerns around his behaviour, emotional control and communication in school. Professionals will consider looking at a possible ASD diagnosis in the future.

Nathan - is male and at time of interview was 9 years old and was in year 5 at a mainstream primary school. School have ongoing concerns around Nathan's behaviour. He has a diagnosis of ASC. He also has literacy difficulties and has been diagnosed as having a Specific Learning Difficulty; dyslexia. During the time of interview school were preparing documentation to make a request for statutory assessment for an Educational Health and Care Plan. He enjoys playing with his friends.

Callum - is a male and at time of interview was 9 years old and was in year 5 at a mainstream Primary school. He has received two FEXs because of physical assault and school have ongoing concerns about his persistent disruptive behaviour in school.

Sam - is male and at time of interview was 8 years old and was in year 4 at a mainstream primary school. Sam has no formal diagnosis, but school report concerns of consistent disruptive behaviour and ongoing social emotional and mental health needs. Sam enjoys watching movies and playing with his friends.

Liam - is male and at time of interview was 8 years old and was in year 4 at a mainstream primary school. He was on a reduced timetable and was attending school for two hours a day due to ongoing concerns around his disruptive behaviour in school. Although no formal diagnosis has been confirmed, his paediatrician has reported that he has features which could be suggestive of ADHD.

Appendix 9: Semi-structured interview schedule

As suggested in Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) I started my interview schedule with a single question that allowed for a fairly descriptive response ‘can you tell me about your school?’ Dependent on the detail of the participant’s response, I followed this answer up with several open-ended questions to elicit further detail about their school.

Interview schedule

General starter questions

- Can you tell me about your school? (option to draw)
Can you describe your school to me?
Can you tell me what you do in school?
Can you tell me about the people at school?
So, what happens at school?
How do you feel at school?
Can you tell me the best thing about school? Can you tell me more about how that makes you feel?
Is there anything that makes you not want to come to school?
Do you find anything difficult in school?
Do you have any worries at school?
Can you tell me about what helps you in school?

BLOB Classroom picture

- Can you colour in the Blob that you think is most like you in the classroom?
- Can you tell me about this Blob?
What causes the Blob to be/feel like this?
Which Blob would you most like to be? Can you tell me more? What would need to happen for Blob 1 to be more like Blob 2?

BLOB Playground picture

- Can you colour in the Blob that you think is most like you in the playground?
- Can you tell me about this Blob?
What causes the Blob to be/feel like this?
Which Blob would you most like to be? Can you tell me more? What would need to happen for Blob 1 to be more like Blob 2?

Kinetic school drawing

Can you draw a picture of you at school. Make sure you add some adults and other pupils. You all must be doing something.

- Can you describe what is happening in your picture to me?

What have you drawn everyone doing in your picture? Can you tell me more...

How might you be feeling in this picture?

Can you tell me about the adults in the picture? What are they doing? Why might they be doing this?

Can you tell me what the other young people in your picture are doing?

Why might they be doing this?

What else would you like to tell me about your picture?

The Non-Ideal School

Ask the young person to think about the kind of school they would NOT like to have (I tend to use the term “worst school”). This is not a real school, but one they can use their imagination to create.

- Can you tell me about your picture?

What’s that? Why is that important? What’s happening there? Why have you included that?

1. What are the most important things in this school?
2. What is the worst thing in this school?
3. If you were to walk into this school, how would you feel? Why?
4. If this school has rules, what would they be?
5. Can you describe what the students are doing?
6. Tell me about the students.
7. What are the adults doing?
8. Tell me about the adults.
9. What else would you like to tell me about your non-ideal school?

The Ideal school

Ask the young person to think about the kind of school they would like to have (I tend to use the term “dream school”). This is not a real school, but one they can dream of and use their imagination to create.

- Can you tell me about your picture?

What’s that? Why is that important? What’s happening there?

1. What are the most important things in this school?
2. What is your favourite thing in this classroom?
3. If you were to walk into this classroom, how would you feel?
4. Can you describe the classroom rules to me?
5. What are the students doing?

6. Tell me about the students?
7. What are the adults doing?
8. Tell me about the adults.
9. What else would you like to tell me about your ideal school?

Appendix 10: Interview techniques

Blob Pictures; participants were asked to look at a picture of a classroom and a playground, each containing several Blob people doing different things. Participants were then asked to the Blob that they think is most like them in each of the pictures. Participants were asked additional questions relating to their chosen blobs to further explore the reasons for their choice.

Kinetic School Drawing; participants were asked to draw a picture of themselves doing something at school. They were asked to add a couple of other people including teaching staff or other pupils in their drawing.

The Ideal School; participants were asked to draw a picture of their 'non-ideal school', the school they would not like to go to, and their 'ideal school', the school they would like to go to. Follow up questions will be asked to establish what aspects of school are important to them.

Appendix 11: Ethical considerations

Confidentiality

Within qualitative research we need to be particularly sensitive to issues of confidentiality and researchers should ensure the complete confidentiality of information obtained from participants during data collection (Willig, 2013). Research participants have the right for information they disclose to be treated confidentially and efforts should be made to ensure that participants cannot be identified from any published information. If confidentiality cannot be guaranteed then this needs to be communicated to the research participant (BPS, 2014). Exceptional circumstances may arise where the duty of confidentiality may be overridden by the duty to protect participants from harm, in this case information may need to be shared. The participant will be made aware of the need to share any information should this occur (BPS, 2014). When I met with participants, I explained to them that all information collected would remain confidential, unless they shared any information that I felt put them at risk of harm and then I would need to share this information with school. This was also communicated using visual supports on the participant information sheet. To ensure confidentiality within my research I transcribed each of the interviews myself and stored information securely to help further maintain confidentiality within my research.

Anonymity

It is important that researchers take the necessary precautions to try and ensure that information shared will not allow participants to become identifiable (Willig, 2013). To try and ensure anonymity within my research I assigned a pseudo name to each participant and I did not disclose any personal information in my research that would make the participant easily identifiable e.g. date of birth or school. When I met with participants it was explained to them that best efforts would be made to ensure anonymity throughout the research process, however I communicated to them that I could not guarantee that some information they disclosed would not make them recognisable.

Risk of harm

An important part of any research project is the avoidance of harm to its research participants (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Researchers need to safeguard their participants and work to maintain positive psychological well-being and ensure they

maintain their dignity at all times (Willig, 2013). In qualitative research it is particularly important to consider to what extent engaging a participant in conversations about a topic that is sensitive can cause that participant emotional harm (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Although my research explores the sensitive topic of school exclusion, to ensure the emotional safety of my participants interviews focused around their generic school experiences and therefore allowed participants to choose which specific aspects of school they wanted to talk about. Pupils were also not explicitly asked to talk about their experiences of school exclusion. I ensured that I included activities within the interview schedule that I knew participants would enjoy to help them feel comfortable during data collection. Throughout data collection as a researcher I ensured that I was attuned to the research participant and if a participant displayed behaviours that implied, they were becoming distressed during the interview I would terminate the interview immediately. Participants were also explicitly told and reminded throughout that they were allowed to stop the interview and withdraw from the research at any time should they wish to.

Informed consent

The BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018) states that any person taking part in research should consent freely to their involvement based on the receipt of adequate information of their involvement. Informed consent must be gained from participants before they take part in any data collection. This involves ensuring that participants have a thorough understanding of what they should expect by taking part in data collection interviews (Willig, 2013). However, in IPA studies it is also important to get informed consent from participants for the use of data extracts within the write up of the research (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Before any data collection it is important that the participant is aware of the topic of conversation and the types of information that will likely be talked about during the interview (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). For participants under the age of 16 years of age, parents or guardians should be fully informed of the study and should be given the option to withdraw their child from the study should they wish to (BPS, 2014). To address the issue of informed consent within this research study I ensured that each participant was given an information sheet that gave clear and comprehensive information about the research and what would happen if they consented to take part. As my participants were of a young age the information sheet used simple language with visuals to support. I met with each participant before data collection to verbally go through the

information sheet to ensure their understanding. This also gave them the opportunity to ask any questions about their involvement or for clarity about anything that was said on the information sheet. Once I had read the information sheet with the participant, they consented by writing their name on a consent form. Through this process I was confident that this allowed participants to make a fully informed decision about their participation in the research. To ensure good practice as outlined by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) I revisited the issue of consent when I met with each participant for data collection and asked them if they were still happy to participate in the study. Participants were told that they were allowed to withdraw their consent at any time during the data gathering stage. Participants were reminded of this both at the beginning and at the end of the interview.

Appendix 12: Six-steps of data analysis

Step one; the first step of data analysis for an IPA study involves the reading and re-reading of the raw data (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). This required me to become fully immersed in my data transcripts. To help me do this I transcribed each interview myself, which required me to listen and re-listen to the transcripts. This allowed for initial familiarity with the data to develop. Once I had a completed transcription of the interview, I read it through again whilst listening to the audio recording of the interview as suggested by Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). This stage of data analysis allows for a true focus to be given to the participant and for me, the researcher to start to get a real insight into the participants experiences of school (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

Step two; the next stage of data analysis as documented by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) is the initial noting of the transcript. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) describe this as possibly the most time consuming and most detailed part of the analysis. This part of the analysis allowed me to build on my familiarity of the transcript from step one. This stage allowed me to develop a cohesive set of notes on the data. The types of comments I made were; descriptive comments; these focused on describing the context and identifying things that might matter, linguistic comments; the way in which content was presented, and conceptual comments; interpretative and a move away from the explicit meaning of the data. These categories of commenting were guided by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009). They were not intended to provide an exhaustive guide to commentary, however I felt that they usefully provided some structure to my initial noting. An example of analysis at this stage can be seen below.

Step three; by this stage of data analysis I had a detailed familiarity with the data. This stage required me to start looking for emergent themes across the data. The aim of this was to try and reduce the volume of detail in the data. In doing so it was important not to reduce the complexity of the data by looking for interrelationships, connections and patterns between the notes made in step two (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Whilst looking for themes, the data becomes somewhat fragmented as the transcript becomes re-organised to accommodate the identified themes. The emergent themes allowed me to start to identify what was important in what was

being said during the interview. These themes represent mine (as the analysts) interpretations of the data to reflect an overall understanding of the transcript.

Step four; by this stage I had developed a key set of chronological themes from the data. At this stage I looked at the set of themes to see how they fit together. To do this I moved the themes around so that they formed clusters of related themes, to do this I wrote each of the original themes down on a piece of paper and moved these around until they were all meaningfully clustered in to groups. I then produced a graphic representation of these themes as shown below, which also shows the development of subordinate themes.

Step five; because I am not conducting a single case study, and because I interviewed a total of six participants, the next stage required me to move on to the next case, repeating steps one to four. It was important that I analysed the next case in its own right and regarded it with the same individuality as the first case, as recommended by Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). I ensured I did this for all of the subsequent participant transcripts.

Step six; this stage required me to look for patterns across all six cases. In doing so I had visual representations of each case and looked for any possible connections between them. Often this allowed for key themes to be illuminated, for certain themes to emerge as particularly important and it also required me to relabel themes and make connections between them.

Appendix 13: Data analysis examples

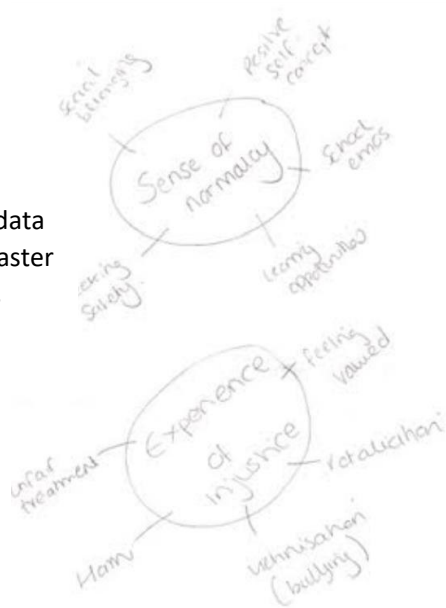


Step three of data analysis - Initial themes emerging from the data



Step four of data analysis - Development of superordinate themes

Step six of data analysis - Master themes



Appendix 14: Example transcript – Sam

Emerging themes		Transcript	Initial notes	Interpretations
	TEP	Ok		
	P5	And sickness		
	TEP	Ooo		
	P5	We're learning about the esoph no that thing going down		
	TEP	Ok yeh		
	P5	Yeh um it's quite disgusting		
	TEP	Fantastic		
Learning as fun	P5	She um my teacher made a joke at the end about um um a silver blue blob in the cup because you get to push it out the cup um they um one of um samuels said hey there's still a blob in there ooo you need to save that um I might need a poo later		<u>Describes learning as a fun and positive experience in his science lesson</u>
	TEP	Uh oh dear. So what else what have you been doing in school this morning? How's school gone this morning?		
	P5	It's been fine		
	TEP	It's been fine, can you tell me a bit more about that?		
	P5	Um I went to go and speak to the Head teacher	Went to speak to the head teacher about an incident with a peer	
	TEP	Ok what was that about?		
Sense of injustice Social conflict	P5	Um just someone trying to fight me		<u>Sense of injustice – someone trying to fight him – possible difficulties with social relationships in school</u> <u>Social understanding?</u>
	TEP	Oh no		

Sense of injustice Social conflict	P5	Yesterday I went to detention because someone tried to fight me and then when I come in again this morning someone um like boy who was trying to fight me came up to me and um like just pulled a face at me		<p><u>'someone tried to fight me' – inability to understand social situations – why did someone try to fight him – possible inability to manage the social situation – limited understanding of his role in this scenario</u></p> <p><u>An injustice that they had to go to detention, but he perceived that someone tried to fight him</u></p> <p><u>Sense of injustice is fuelled by his limited understanding of the scenario</u></p> <p><u>Possible public self-awareness – wanting the situation to be perceived as someone else's fault</u></p>
	TEP	So what happens when they try to fight you?		
Coping	P5	Um I try and walk away		<u>Knowing what he needs to do, but appears that he may struggle to do this – something preventing him from doing it</u>
	TEP	You try to walk away, can you tell me a bit more about that		
	P5	No no I cant really	Cannot explain more about it	<u>Possibly not understanding what is stopping him</u>
	TEP	No, but sometimes people try to fight you, how does that make you feel?		

	P5	Not very nice	Does not feel nice when people try to fight him	<u>Social conflict may lead to negative feelings</u>
	TEP	No		
Sense of injustice Harm	P5	Then I'm the one that get's told off when they try to head butt me or push me in to a wall I'm the one that gets told off	He gets told off when others try to hurt him	<u>A sense of injustice – feels that he should not be the one that gets told off – is this due to a limited understanding of the social situation – social vulnerability</u> <u>A sense that he feels misunderstood</u> <u>Reliving times of social conflict – this appears to be important for this young person</u> <u>A sense of harm in school – possibly feeling unsafe with his peers</u>
	TEP	Ah ok. So how do you feel in general at school?		
	P5	Happy	Feels happy in school	<u>In general reports feeling positive at school – is this a simplified explanation of how he feels in school?</u>
	TEP	Any other feelings?		
Feelings	P5	Uh worried		
	TEP	Worried. So what makes you happy?		
Friendship	P5	Seeing all my friends	Friends make him happy	Importance of friends in school
	TEP	Get you tell me about your friends?		
Friendship	P5	Ok one of my friend's called Logan, he lives near me in real life, go round his house sometimes he comes round mine and we're just friends		<u>Very practical explanation of friendship – little true explanation of a friendship</u>

	TEP	That's nice		
Relationships	P5	Mmm me and Harry are really good friends, Harry's a school counsellor	Describes Harry as a good friend	<u>The understanding that him and Harry are good friends</u>
	TEP	Ok		
Play	P5	And um like he plays with me a lot and plays a little game called 'business' it's really cool yeh	Harry and him play	<u>Perceives that a friend is someone that plays with you – play important</u>
	TEP	Sounds good. Anything else make you happy in school? You said about all your friends		
	P5	All the paintings	Enjoys the paintings in school	<u>Environmental aspects of school – does this help contribute to a positive school ethos/environment</u>
	TEP	All the paintings		
	P5	They're awesome		
	TEP	They are good aren't they have you got lots of those around school?		
	P5	*nods*		
	TEP	Yeh. Brilliant. And you mentioned about feeling a bit worried sometimes		
	P5	Yeh		
	TEP	Can you tell me about what makes you feel worried at school?		
External factors - family	P5	That my mum gets hurt	Worries that his mum will get hurt	<u>Pre-occupied - Is feeling worried about his mum – does he know how to manage these feelings that he feels?</u>
	TEP	That your mum gets hurt? Can you explain a little bit more about that to me?		
Self-protection	P5	No	Doesn't want to elaborate on his mum getting hurt	<u>Is he trying to protect himself by not talking about this any further?</u>

	TEP	No? How does that make you, how does worried make you kind of act in school when you're feeling worried what might that look like in school if you're worried?		
	P5	Nothing	Doesn't know what 'feeling worried' might look like	<u>A reluctance to share more about this – maybe unsure how to safely talk about his worries?</u> <u>Limited understanding as to how being worried might impact upon his behaviour</u>
	TEP	No. Do you think you look different if you're worried than if you're happy in school?		
Feelings	P5	No, I just keep it in	Keeps his worries in	<u>A protection or inability to express in a safe way?</u>
	TEP	Just keep it in. And how often do you think you worry about your mum when you're in school?		
	P5	Quite a lot	Worries about his mum in school a lot	<u>Worrying about his mum is likely to have an impact on his ability to engage in school he is worrying about her a lot</u>
	TEP	Quite a lot		
External factors - Sleep	P5	I have bad dreams a lot	Being worried leads to bad dreams	<u>The worries that he feels for his mum are impacting upon his sleep</u>
	TEP	Do you? And what are your dreams about?		
Self-protection	P5	I don't really wanna tell you	Doesn't want to say what his dreams are about	<u>Self protection??</u>
	TEP	No that's ok, you don't have to but if you want to tell me later you can, that's fine		

	P5	That looks like a smiley face, let me show you how, I think this becomes a smiley face because the eye there and then the nose and the mouth		<u>Offering a distraction - is this a strategy for self-protection</u>
	TEP	Oh it does! The this kind of greeny bit could be a fringe or like hair *laugh* oh that's good		
	P5	Suppose to be a bridge		
	TEP	Yeh not it's good I like it. Do you know who made it?		
	P5	No		
	TEP	No, I don't know either. So is there anything else that makes you not want to come to school sometimes?		
	P5	Um, no not really	Nothing else that makes him not want to come to school	<u>A possible reluctance to share – why is he reluctant to share?</u>
	TEP	No. And is there anything you find difficult in school? What might you find difficult in school?		
	P5	English		
	TEP	English		
Teacher relationship	P5	I really don't like my English teacher	Does not like his English teacher	
	TEP	No, can you tell me about your English teacher?		
Negative teacher attributes	P5	Well this is it one of my friends got hit by her and my other one got called an idiot by her	Recalls a time when his friend got hit by his teacher	<u>How he views his teacher and the image that he has built up of his teacher as being capable of 'hitting' a pupil – possibly sees his English teacher as a threat</u>
	TEP	Oh dear, how did that make them feel?		
	P5	They never spoke to her again, but they have to because they ask her lots of questions		
	TEP	So what do you think about your English teacher?		
Negative teacher attributes	P5	Just don't like her she's rude to all my friends like even people who used to be in the school say she's a really bad teacher don't go near her so just all my friends don't like her	Describes his teacher as rude and being a bad teacher	<u>Negative perceptions of the teacher – significance of how this teacher is viewed – views her as threatening and does not value her as a teacher – how is</u>

				<u>this likely to impact upon how he behaves towards this teacher</u>
	TEP	What does she do to be rude?		
	P5	This is the reason I came out of my class this morning to go and speak to her um		
	TEP	Who did you speak to this morning?		
	P5	The Head teacher	Had to speak to the head teacher this morning about an incident in class	
	TEP	Oh ok, about this teacher?		
Sense of injustice	P5	Yeh about this teacher, I was trying to uh she asked me a question so I tried to answer but she's like 'No this this this is not this is not what I'm trying to ask you no no this is not what I'm trying to ask you' and then it annoys me because this is what she was trying to ask me and she telling this is what she doesn't want to ask me so just confuses	Describes a conflict situation in class where he did not feel that he was treated fairly by his teacher	<u>Young person became very agitated talking about this incident – a sense of injustice that the teacher was not listening to him</u>
	TEP	So what do you think the teacher could have done differently? How would you like her to have acted?		
Feeling valued	P5	Acted...um I'd like her to say 'um can you please read the question again, you might have got it wrong'	Feels that the teacher could have handled the situation differently	<u>Wanting to be treated fairly – wanted the teacher to respond in a different way</u> <u>How the teacher responded has caused this young person to feel annoyed</u>
	TEP	And how would that have made you feel? If she'd acted like that?		<u>How the teacher responds can impact upon how the child perceives the situation to be and can impact upon how they are feeling and how they are likely to behave</u>
Feelings	P5	Happy		

	TEP	And what do you thin would have been different?		
	P5	Like I just said that would be different		
	TEP	And instead did you get sent out of the class, is that what happened? Yeh, is that because of what happened, can you describe to me what happened when she said to you 'that's not what I'm asking you' what happened then?		
Retaliation	P5	Um I pushed my stuff across the room and she sent me out	Pushed his stuff across the room as a reaction to his teacher	<u>Inability to correctly manage his feelings</u> <u>Emotional regulation</u> <u>What does this say about his ability to manage emotions?</u>
	TEP	Fantastic and can you tell me what helps you in school?		
Feeling valued	P5	My teachers I li like my favourite teacher's Mrs Sole she's my favourite teacher because she listens to me, she understands, she just really understands me		<u>The importance of being listened to by teachers – what does this achieve for the young person? A sense of feeling valued?</u> <u>Relationships with adults significant</u>
	TEP	Aw she sounds nice, yeh and what does she teacher you for?		
	P5	She's my TA		
	TEP	Ah ok, she's your TA and is she with you all the time?		
	P5	Most of the time		
	TEP	Is she the one that's off sick at the moment? Yeh so she's not in at the moment		
	P5	Yep		
	TEP	Do you want me to get a tissue for that?		
	P5	What's that for?		
	TEP	We're going to get on to that in a minute...probably next. So these are my Blob pictures, have you seen these before?		

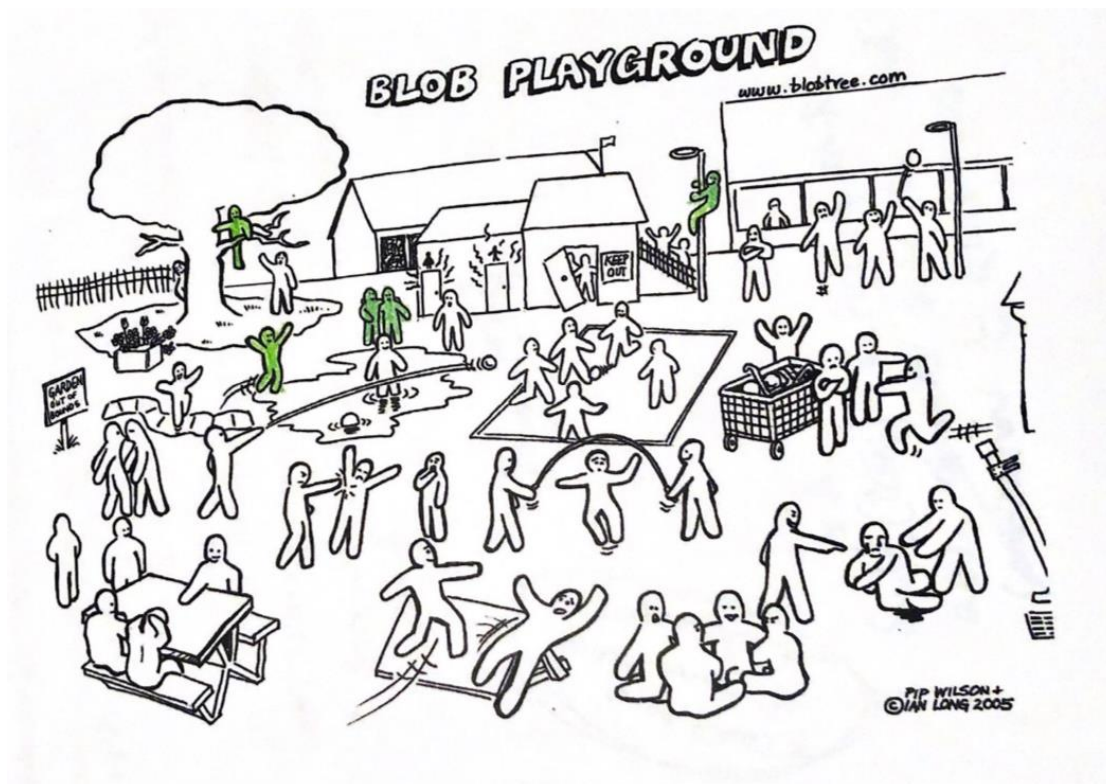
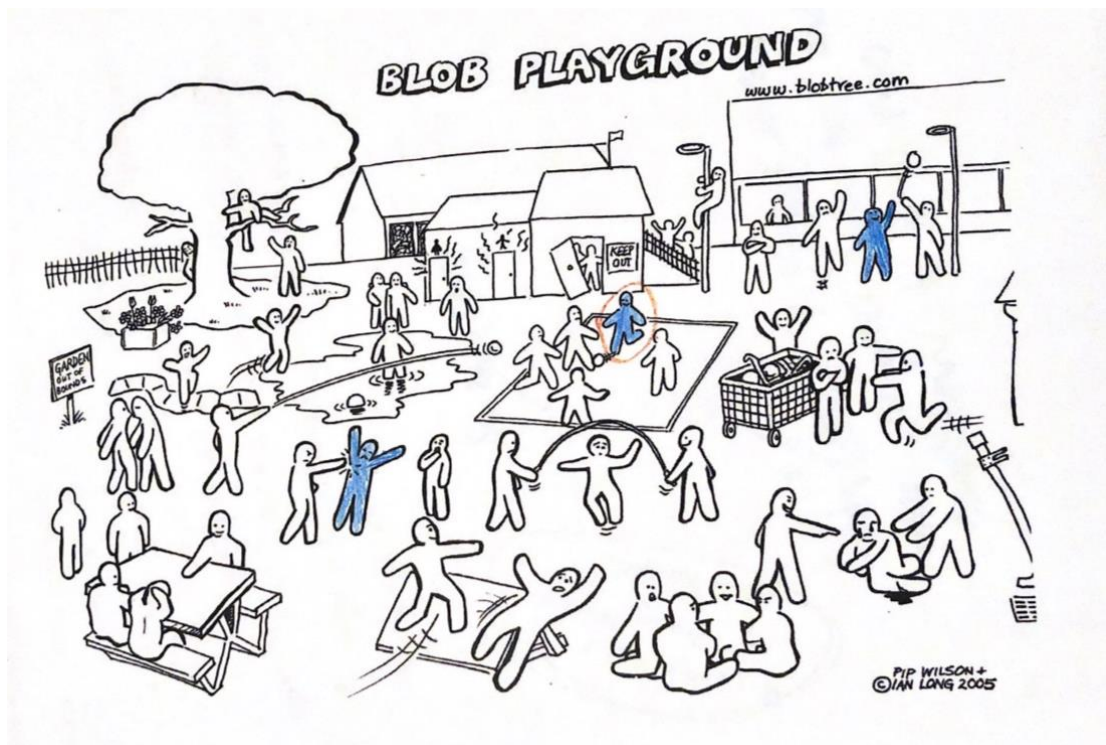
	P5	I think I know which one is me		
	TEP	Do you?		
	P5	Yeh		
	TEP	Well that's good		
	P5	That one's me, that's me		
	TEP	Lift your arm up I'll wipe that for you [wipes table]		
	P5	That's probably me		
	TEP	Ok so have you seen these before?		
	P5	No		
	TEP	Do you have a favourite colour?		
	P5	Yeh		
	TEP	What's your favourite colour, you said red didn't you?		
	P5	No, it's it's light green, but you don't have a light green I'll just use that green I like dark and light green yeh so colour it in		
	TEP	So I want you to colour in the Blobs, so this is my Blob classroom, so you've got lots of different people in the classroom, I want you to colour in the Blob that you think is most like you in the classroom, which one's most like Daniel in the classroom?		
	P5	You remember my name?		
	TEP	Yeh of course and you remember mine as well, we're doing well		
External factors (sleep)	P5	I'm always so tired I always go like this	Feels tired in school	<u>How is this likely to impact how he presents in school?</u>
	TEP	[laugh]		
		<i>Participant is colouring in</i>		
	P5	I've never seen these before		
	TEP	Have you not, ah I like I like my Blob pictures, they're quite good aren't they?		
	P5	Yeh, did you photocopy them yourself?		
	TEP	I did		

	P5	Oh um am I allowed to choose a couple		
	TEP	Yeh of course if you got lots of different ones that are like you then we'll talk about them in a minute		
	P5	That's probably me too		
	TEP	Go on colour him in then		
		<i>Participant is colouring</i>		
	P5	Shall I tell you who that probably is?		
	TEP	Yeh		
	P5	That's probably um Dr no fin, he left my school now		
	TEP	Ok		
Harm Social conflict	P5	He used to be really rude to me always used to try and bite me and punch me in the face	Peer used to be rude to him and try and bite and punch him	<u>Perceives that his peer tried to hurt him – harm</u> <u>Is this a true reflection of what happened?</u> <u>Sometimes feels that others are in the wrong – what role did he play in these scenarios?</u> <u>Social understanding</u>
	TEP	Oh no		
	P5	So he's but he left		
		<i>Participant is colouring</i>		
	TEP	And what used to happen when he used to do that to you?		
	P5	Used to go and tell the teacher	Used to tell the teacher	
	TEP	Yeh		
Coping – avoidance	P5	And I tried to just run away	Tried to just run away	<u>Tried to run away – what prevented him from doing this – inability to appropriately manage his feelings even though he knows what he should do</u>
	TEP	Where did you run to?		

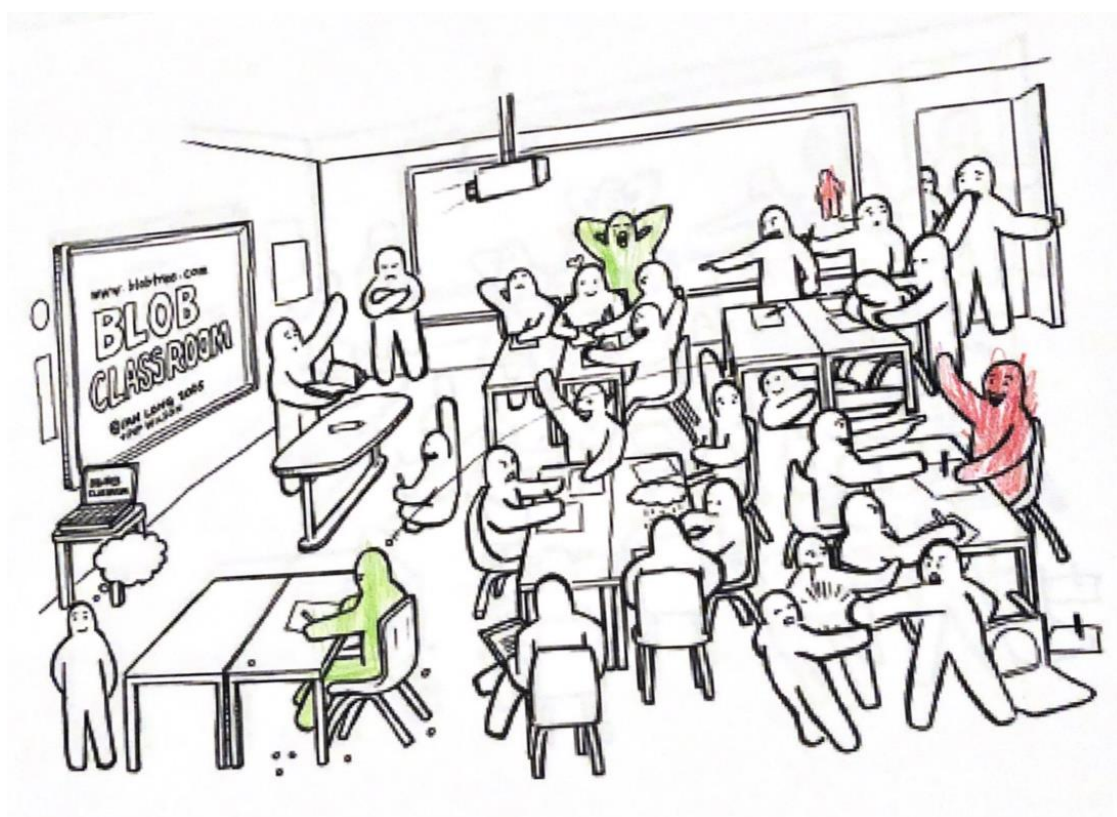
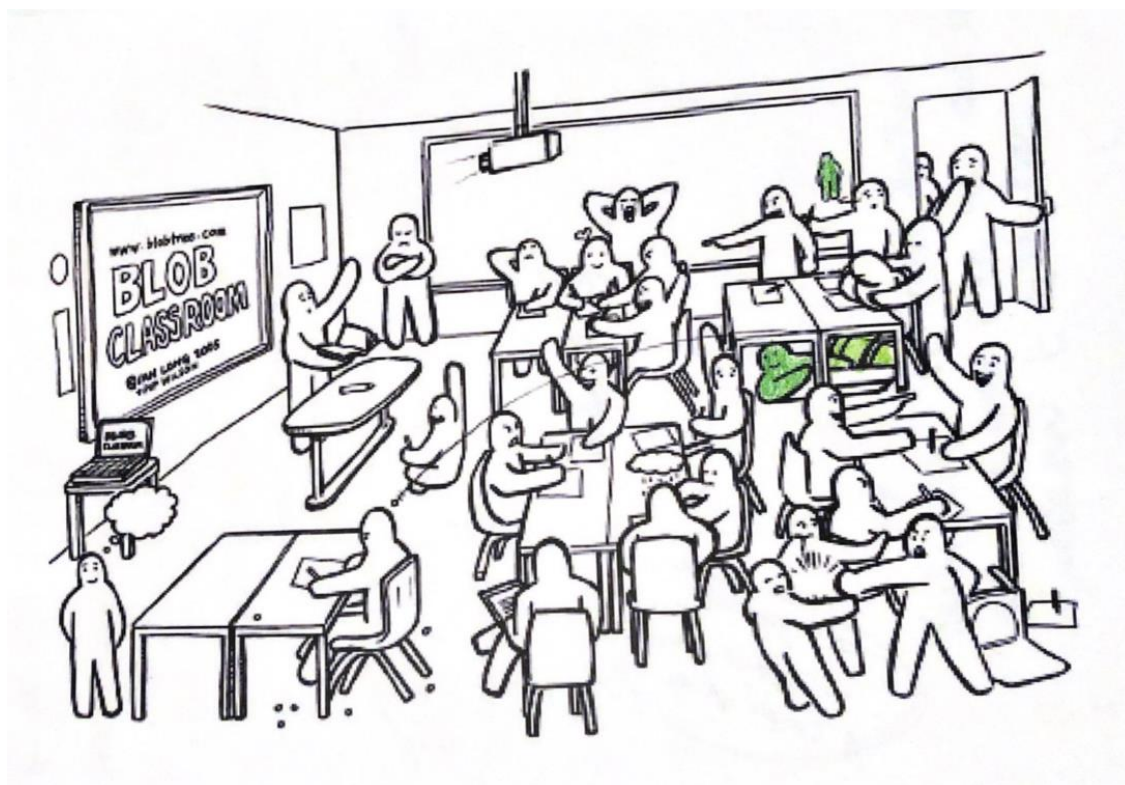
Self-belief	P5	The other side of the mugger (0.3) I'm a really good colourer aren't I?		<u>Importance of being viewed as 'good'</u>
	TEP	Yeh it's lovely and neat. Ok are those the two? Yeh so can you tell me a bit about this Blob first then?		
	P5	Um I'm always tired, I'm always just just always feel tired, then that one just always working		
	TEP	Always working, so what makes you always tired do you think?		
External factor - sleep	P5	Um whenever I go to bed I have a problem that I can't ever go to sleep, I try to go to sleep but I can't, I'm always wide awake, but when I wake up in the morning I'm always so grumpy	Difficulties with sleep	<u>Lack of sleep can impact upon how he is feeling in school – can come in to school feeling tired – bad dreams impact upon his ability to sleep</u>
	TEP	Then what so what happens if this Blob is feeling tired in the classroom, what happens when he's feeling tired?		
	P5	I go like this		
	TEP	So put your head on the table yeh and then what happens if you do that?		
	P5	Um it's only for like when we're allowed to just chill out so I do		
	TEP	And then what about this one here, how's he feeling?		
Feelings	P5	He's feeling worky		<u>Difficulty naming the feeling 'worky'? What does this mean? Limited emotional literacy</u>
	TEP	Worky? What's making him feel worky?		
	P5	I dunno just feeling w....what is that?		
	TEP	Looks like it's a a Blob with his arms folded on the table doesn't it and then he's got another person behind him, could be an adult helping him or another young person. So out of all of these then Daniel, if you could choose one Blob in the classroom that you wanted to be, which one would you choose? I'll give you another colour,		

		what other colour, what is your second favourite colour?		
	P5	Um red (0.3) which one I could be		
	TEP	Yeh. If you could choose any Blob to be, which would you be?		
		<i>Participant is colouring</i>		
		And how is that Blob feeling?		
Feelings - negative	P5	He is feeling kind of all the feelings	He feels all of the feelings	<u>Negative feelings 'all the feelings' what does this mean?</u> <u>Possibly feeling overwhelmed by all of the feelings</u>
	TEP	All the feelings and what is he doing?		
	P5	Just standing there		
	TEP	And why would you like to be that Blob? Can you tell me why you chose that one?		
Overwhelmed	P5	I don't know, just because I feel all the feelings all the time I just stand all the time		

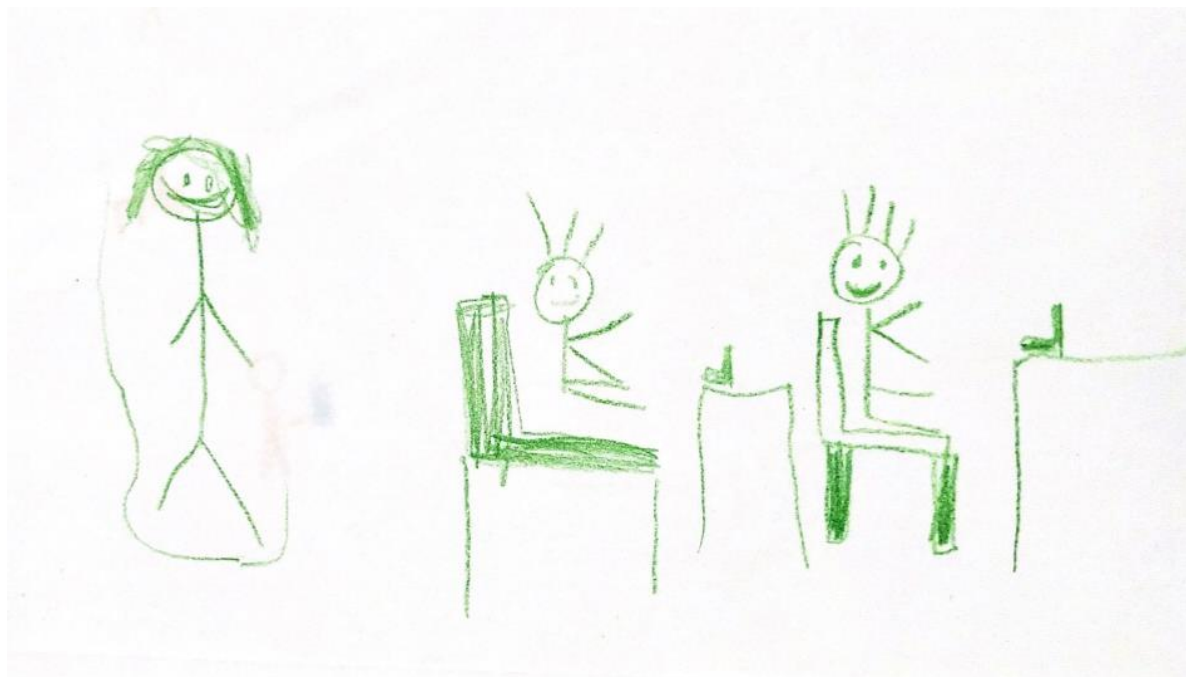
Appendix 15: Blob Playground examples



Appendix 16: Blob Classroom examples



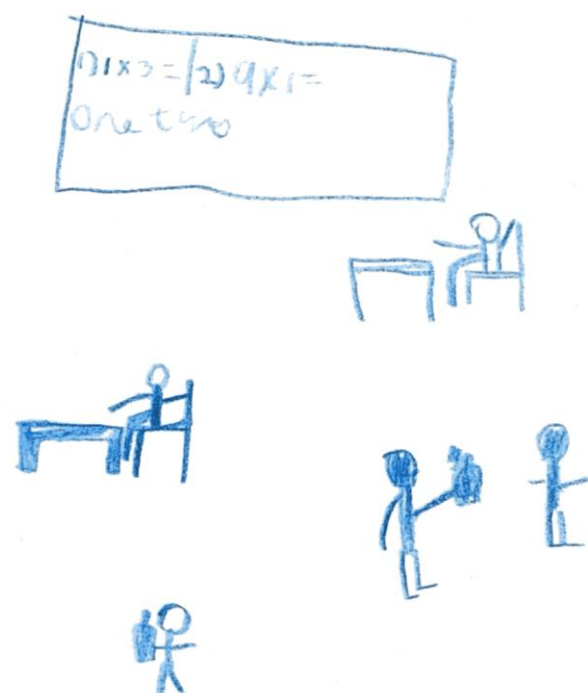
Appendix 17: Kinetic school drawing example



Appendix 18: Non-Ideal (worst) school examples

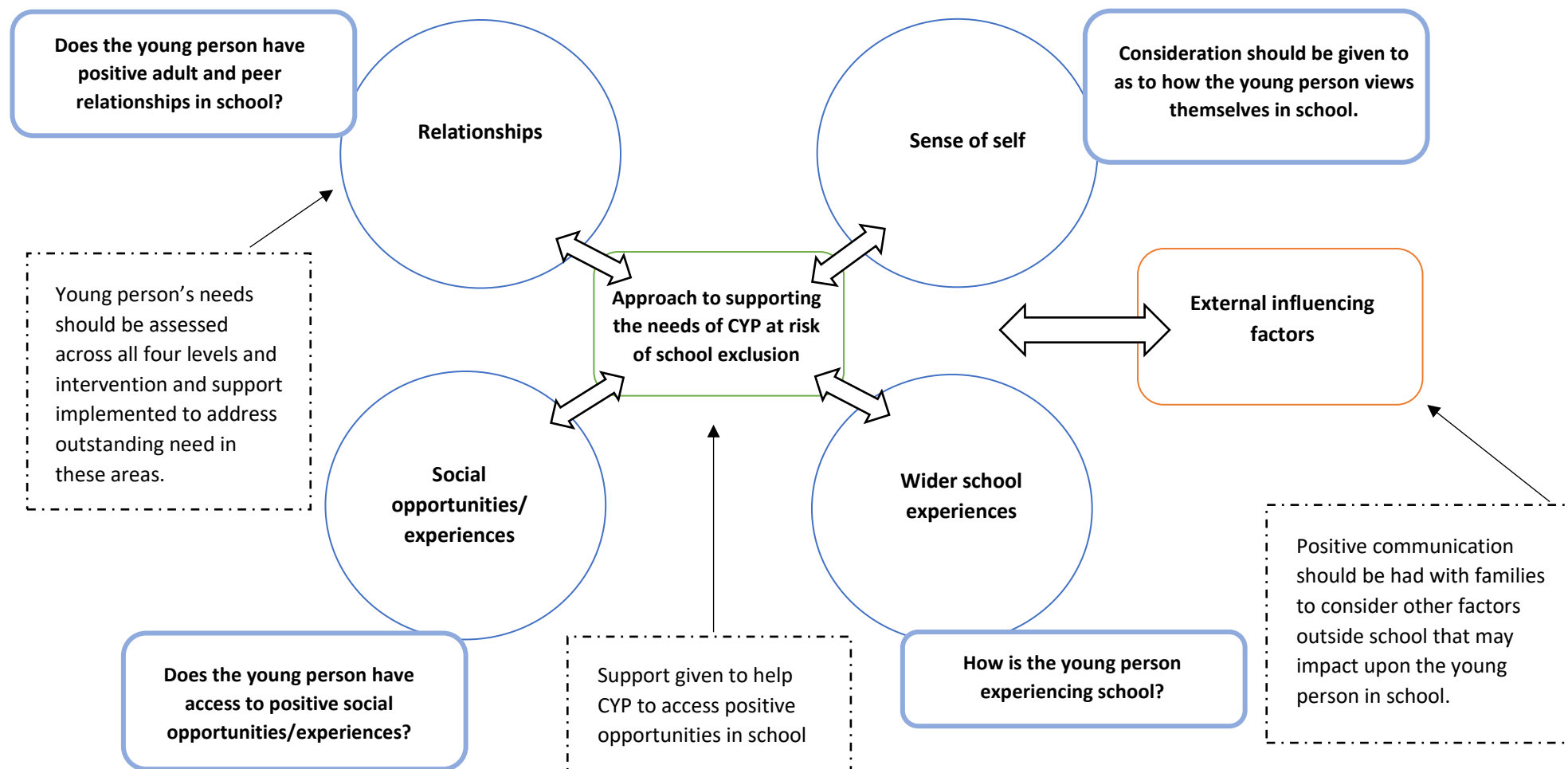


Appendix 19: Ideal school examples



Appendix 20: Targeted intervention model

A targeted intervention model for consideration with children at risk of school exclusion (part one)



A targeted intervention model for consideration with children at risk of school exclusion (part two)

(Questions for consideration)

CYP identified as being at risk of school exclusion need support to enable them to access normalcy in school. Considerations should be given across the four areas to overcome any difficulties these young people are experiencing and to help them engage in positive school experiences.

Relationships

- Does this young person have positive peer relationships?
- Is the young person experiencing positive adult relationships?
- Are they valued and treated fairly?
- What further support needs to be given to enhance the pupil/teacher relationships?

Sense of self

- How does the young person feel in school?
- What might be contributing towards this?
- How are their feelings impacting on their school experience?
What support/opportunities might this young person need?

Social opportunities/experiences

- Does the young person have access to positive social experiences?
- Are they achieving a sense of belonging in school?
- What further support needs to be given to ensure this young person has access to positive social experiences and experience social belonging?

School experiences

- How does the young person experience school?
- What contributes towards this; ethos, learning needs, safety, environment?
- How might their school experience be acting as a barrier to them in school?
- What support could be considered to enhance their school experience?

External influencing factors

- Are professionals aware of any contributing factors outside of school?
- What is the quality of home/school communication?
- How can we minimise risk factors outside of school?
- What additional support needs to be accessed to achieve this?

Appendix 21: Reflexive account

The recruitment process

The proposed process to recruit participants for my research study was through the EPS that I was on placement with during my Doctoral training. I presented my research proposal and recruitment criteria during a team meeting, and EPs expressed that they would be happy to make initial contact with their link schools to establish if these schools had any young people who were considered to be at risk of PEX in line with the outlined recruitment criterion. Using data collected from the local authority's school exclusions team I was also able to establish which schools had high exclusion rates the previous year, which provided a guide as to which schools would be most likely to have young people who were at risk of PEX. When schools expressed an interest in taking part in the research study, they were sent information sheets and consent forms. Despite some initial expressions of interest from some schools, I found that many of schools who were high excluders the previous year did not express that they had any young people who they felt met the recruitment criteria. I reflected on this, and felt that some schools might be reluctant to 'admit' that they were considering excluding any of their pupils, particularly within the Primary phase, maybe due to concerns as to where this information may be passed on to and any consequences that they may associate with this. It was interesting to note that schools that were included in the study all had an established relationship with their EP, which likely made them feel more comfortable taking part in the research process and highlighted to me the importance and significance of these trusting relationships. I have already addressed the issue of 'gatekeepers' in more depth in chapter 3 and how 'gatekeepers' such as schools, can impact the success of a research study. This also raised the question of power dynamics and if gatekeepers feel in a vulnerable position this will likely impact upon their willingness to take part, and I wonder if this could have been addressed by ensuring that EPs were being more explicit about the purpose of the research during initial conversations to alleviate any anxieties that schools may have had. I also had one school who showed initial interest early on during recruitment drop out just before data collection. The school expressed that they no longer felt that they had the time to commit to the study, however I also wonder if there were other factors that contributed to them no longer wanting to take part. Despite this causing me to reflect on the difficulty of

recruiting such a vulnerable participant population, I remained hopeful and explored other avenues by which I might be able to recruit participants. I therefore made contact with the SEMH team within the Local Authority who were a team that also worked closely with schools, and specifically with children who were likely to be at risk of PEX and therefore schools would likely need to be more explicit with this team about the nature of their exclusions. On reflection I feel that it would have been beneficial to make contact with this team earlier on in the recruitment process. Overall however I am pleased with the number of schools who consented to take part in the study and feel that the six participants recruited allowed me to collect some rich data and enabled me to answer my proposed research questions. Also, all of the schools that's took part in the study did so with a great commitment and enthusiasm which allowed for positive data collection and successful research outcomes.